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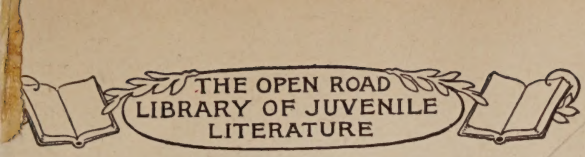

PAGE, ESQUIRE, AND KNIGHT

A BOOK OF CHIVALRY

BY

MARION FLORENCE LANSING, M.A.

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THE

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By MARION FLORENCE LANSING

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RHYMES AND STORIES

FAIRY TALES

VOLUME I

VOLUME II

TALES OF OLD ENGLAND

LIFE IN THE GREENWOOD

PAGE, ESQUIRE, AND KNIGHT

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PREFACE

William Caxton, the first English printer, who ublished his books with a view to edification as ell as to recreation, thought it well to include in is library three books of chivalry, "wherein his eaders should find many joyous and pleasant hisories," and should learn of "the noble acts of chivry, the gentle and the virtuous deeds that some nights did." He had no question that "for to ass the time" his books would be found "pleasant read in," and he was equally confident that the oble lords and ladies who read these histories ould make good use of the same and would "take ie good and honest acts in remembrance and do ter them." We of a later day find the stories of hivalry likewise pleasant, refreshing, and entertaing, and we echo his thought as to their moral value. ow better can gentleness and courtesy, bravery and rdiness, humanity and friendliness, be instilled an by a perusal of stories of chivalry such as have en gathered in this volume of our library of erature?

Page, Esquire, and Knight presents the best ories of all periods of chivalry, from the days of

the founding of the Round Table to the death
Chevalier Bayard. It sets forth in simple story
the development and progress of knighthood
the time of St. George, who won his spurs by kil
ing the dragon, to the founding, a thousand years late
of the order which bore his name and embodied
its ritual the highest ceremonial of chivalry. With
explanation of the meaning of the degrees of knigh
hood, its description of quests and tourneys, and
outline of the great events of chivalry, this volum
will serve as a good introduction to the later readin
of the child in Arthurian and other romance, and
the history of Charlemagne's wars and the crusade

Our best heritage from the Middle Ages is th
ideal side of that system which

> "By a line
> Of institution from our ancestors,
> Hath been deriv'd down to us, and receiv'd
> In a succession, for the noblest way
> Of breeding up our youth in letters, arms,
> Fair mien, discourses, civil exercises,
> And all the blazon of a gentleman."

Chivalry ceased to be of practical value only whe
the conditions of civilization called for men of peac
rather than of war, and the perfect knight was re
placed by the perfect gentleman.

M. F. L.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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Of King Arthur and his Round Table there are many, many stories, for this was

> " The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
> Whereof this world holds record."

These you will read in the books where they are written. In the pages of history and romance you will learn of Guy of Warwick and of Richard the Lion-Hearted, of Louis of France and other famous knights. But here in this little book as well you shall read of knightly quests and strange adventures and of many men who won fame and honor in those olden days

> " When every morning brought a noble chance
> And every chance brought out a noble knight."

And I beseech you all, so many as shall see and read in this book, to keep these gracious and courteous and honorable acts of these knights in remembrance, and to follow after the same, for by oft reading of them you shall accustom yourselves to do knightly deeds, and so shall you win a good name and fame.

THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD

I

How Britain was without a king

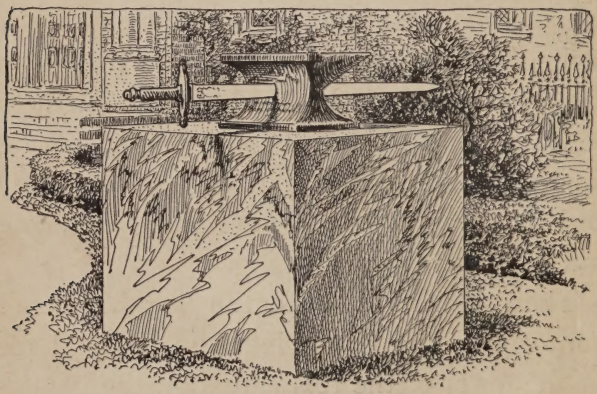
In the olden days in Britain it came to pass that Uther the king died, and none but Merlin, the wise man and magician of the realm, knew that he left a son Arthur, who had been delivered to Merlin at his birth to be trained in all things by him. So for a long time the realm stood in great peril, for every lord that was mighty made himself stronger, and many strove to be king.

Then Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury and counseled him to send for all the lords of the realm, and all the gentlemen of arms, be they earls or barons or knights, to come to London at Christmas time, and there God would show by a sign who was to be rightly king over all England. So the archbishop summoned them all. And many of them made clean their lives, that they might be more acceptable to God.

II

Of the marvel of the appearing of a sword

At Christmas time all the lords and earls and barons and knights came together from every side unto London to await the sign which should show who should be king. And



behold, when they came out from their morning devotions, there in the churchyard they saw standing a great stone. It was of the same breadth and height on every side, and its appearance was like marble. And in the midst of it was an anvil of steel a foot high, and therein stood a fair sword, naked without

sheath or guard, and about it were written letters of gold which said thus: "Whoso pulleth this sword out from this stone is rightwise king born of all England."

Then the people marveled, and all the lords went to gaze upon the stone and the sword. When they read the reading, some tried to pull the sword. One by one the lords and gentlemen of arms, such as would have been king, essayed to pull it. But none might stir the sword, nor even move it.

"He is not here," said the archbishop, "that shall achieve the sword. But doubt not God will make him known. Now this is my counsel, that we choose ten knights, men of good fame, who shall guard this sword. And upon New Year's Day let the barons make a joust and tournament in which every knight of the realm who will shall play. Perchance at that tourney it shall be made known who shall win the sword." And so it was done as the archbishop said.

III

How Arthur pulled out the sword seven times and was made king

Upon New Year's Day the barons rode to the field, and among them were Sir Hector, Sir Kay his son, and young Arthur, whom Merlin had caused to be brought up by Sir Hector as his own son. As they rode, Sir Kay found that he had no sword with him, for he had left it behind at his father's lodging, and he prayed young Arthur to ride back for it.

"I will well," said Arthur, and he rode swiftly back; but when he came to the house it was closed, so that he could not by any means make his way in, for the lady and all the servants were gone to see the jousting.

Then was Arthur angry and said to himself, "Nevertheless, my brother Kay shall not be without a sword this day. I will ride to the churchyard and take the sword that I saw there sticking in a stone."

He rode with all speed to the churchyard, and alighted there and tied his horse to the

stile. When he came to the stone he found no knights there, for they were at the jousting. So he grasped the sword by the handles, and lightly and fiercely pulled it out of the stone, and took his horse and rode till he came to Sir Kay, and delivered to him the sword.

When Sir Kay saw the blade that Arthur had brought him, he knew well that it was the sword of the stone. Straightway he rode to his father, Sir Hector, and said, "Sir, lo, here is the sword of the stone; wherefore I must be king of this land."

But Sir Hector said to him, "Swear to me by thy knightly honor how thou camest by this sword."

"Sir," said Kay, "by my brother Arthur, for he brought it to me."

"How gat ye this sword?" said Sir Hector to Arthur.

"Sir, I will tell you. When I came home for my brother's sword, I found no one at home to deliver it to me. Yet, thought I, my brother Sir Kay should not be swordless. So I went in all haste and pulled out of the stone

in the churchyard this blade which I had seen sticking there as I passed in the way."

"Found ye any knights about this sword?" said Sir Hector.

"None," said Arthur.

"Now," said Sir Hector, "I understand ye must be king of this land."

"Wherefore I?" asked Arthur, "and for what cause?"

"Because God will have it so; for there should never man have drawn out this sword but he that should rightwise be king of this land."

He led Arthur and Sir Kay to the churchyard, and Arthur read the words that were written there, which in his haste to get the sword he had not seen.

"Now," quoth Sir Hector, "let me see whether you can put the sword there as it was and pull it out again."

"That is no mastery," replied Arthur, and he put it into the stone and drew it out again.

"Once more put it in," commanded Sir Hector, and this time he himself essayed to

pull it out, but he could neither move nor stir it.

"Do thou try," he said to Sir Kay. And anon Kay pulled at the sword with all his might, but it would not be moved.

"Now shalt thou essay," said Sir Hector to Arthur.

"I will well," said Arthur, and drew it out easily. That was the third time Arthur had drawn it forth.

Therewithal Sir Hector kneeled down before Arthur, and so likewise did Sir Kay.

"Alas!" quoth Arthur, "mine own dear father and brother, why kneel ye to me?"

"Nay, nay, my lord Arthur," returned Sir Hector, "it is not so. I was never your father,

nor of your blood, but I wot well ye are of an higher blood than ever I thought ye were."

Then Sir Hector told him all, how Merlin had brought Arthur to him at his birth, and how he had nourished and trained him by Merlin's commandment.

Arthur was sore grieved when he understood that Sir Hector was not his father.

"Sir," said Hector, "will ye be to me a good and gracious lord when ye are king?"

"Else were I to blame," said Arthur, "for ye are the man in all the world I am most beholden to, and to my good lady and mother your wife, that hath fostered me and kept me as well and as tenderly as her own. And if ever it be God's will that I be king, as ye say, ye shall desire of me what I may do, and I shall not fail you. God forbid I should fail you while you and I live."

Therewithal they went all three unto the archbishop and told him how the sword was achieved and by whom. On Twelfth Day all the barons came to the churchyard, and he who wished essayed to take the sword. But

there before them all there was none that could draw it save Arthur. Wherefore many lords were angry and said that it was a great shame unto them all and unto the realm to be governed by a boy, and he of no high blood. So it fell out that the crowning of a king was put off till Candlemas, when all the barons should meet there again. (But ten knights were ordained to watch the sword by day and by night. They set a pavilion over the stone, and five always watched.)

At Candlemas many more great lords came thither to win the sword, but none might prevail. And as Arthur did at Christmas, so he did at Candlemas, and pulled out the sword easily. Again the barons were sore aggrieved, and yet again they delayed. As Arthur did at Candlemas, so did he once more at Easter. And still they would not crown him king. Then the archbishop of Canterbury and many of the best knights were full of indignation, and they made a guard of the most worthy knights, those whom King Uther had loved best and trusted most in his day, and all these,

with many others, were always about Arthur day and night until the feast of Pentecost.

At the feast of Pentecost all manner of men essayed once more to pull out the sword, but still none might prevail but Arthur. He pulled it out before all the lords and common people who were there, wherefore all the people cried out, "We will have Arthur for our king; we will have no more delay, for we all see that it is God's will that he shall be our king, and he that holdeth out against him, him will we slay."

Thereupon they all kneeled down, both rich and poor, and cried Arthur mercy because they had delayed so long. And Arthur forgave them, and took the sword between his hands and offered it up on the altar where the archbishop was. So was he made knight by the best man that was there.

Anon, when Arthur had been made a knight, was the coronation made, and there did he swear to his lords and his people to be a true king, and to stand for justice from henceforth all the days of his life.

THE FOUNDING OF THE ROUND TABLE

" For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle and, ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land."

All the kingdom was in distress when Arthur came to the throne, and many wrongs were done by petty lords who governed small portions of the land and cared not what happened to their people if they might wage war on each other and gain more power. Even King Uther and his father before him had never subdued all these lords and barons, for some lived in distant and lonely parts and were so powerful that none dared try his might against them. For many a day these barons and lords refused to acknowledge Arthur as their king, but ere a score of years had passed he had won them all and brought the whole land under his rule, both northward into Scotland, and westward into all of Wales,

and to the south and to the east. As the chronicler tells it, "Many kings and lords made great war against him; but well Arthur overcame them all."

That Arthur could bring all this about was due to the noble prowess of his knights of the Round Table. As soon as he became king he gathered about him all the best knights of the realm, both those whom he had cause to know were mighty and those whom Merlin deemed the best of all. They had been called the knighthood errant of the realm, for they wandered through all the land and across the seas seeking adventure and taking part in tournaments and jousts or in any service that came in their path. There were many of these knights in England, but none had ever gathered them together. Each went his own way and did what seemed best in his own eyes.

King Arthur sent through the length and breadth of the land, summoning those whom he had chosen as the best of these knights to come together and form with him a brotherhood of knighthood, which should be called

"Be thou the king,
And we will work thy will."

the Round Table. There were to be one hundred and fifty in all, but the king found only one hundred and twenty-eight who could fulfill all his wishes. When they came together they were the flower of all the knights of Christendom.

There in Camelot Arthur had built a mighty hall wherein the brotherhood should meet, and there had been set seats for all the knights. These seats the archbishop blessed in the presence of them all, and when it was done, and they sat silent before him, Merlin spoke to them, saying, "Fair sirs, ye must all arise and come to King Arthur for to do him homage."

And they arose and did their homage gladly, crying, "Be thou the king, and we will work thy will."

Then Arthur spoke to them as they stood before him, and bound them to himself with solemn vows. He charged them never to do outrage nor murder, and to flee treason as it were a plague; never to be cruel, but to give mercy, and always to aid women even unto

death; to take up no battles for money, nor to have any part in wrongful quarrels. King Arthur made each knight lay his hands in his and swear

"To reverence the King, as if he were
His conscience, and his conscience as his King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honor his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds."

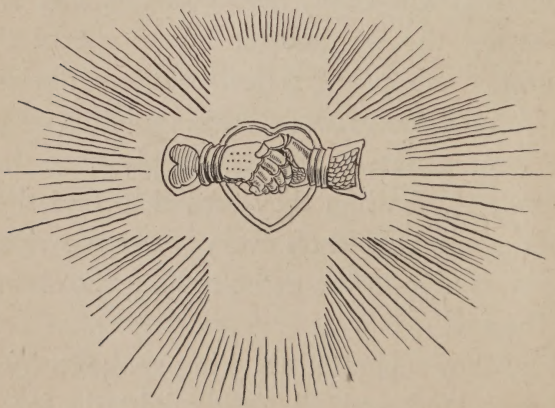
So strait were the vows by which he bound them, that when they rose after kneeling and repeating the words after him, some of the knights were pale as death, others flushed, and others stood half dazed as though a vision had been granted them, so deeply were they moved. And when they turned to find their seats again, behold on every seat was written in letters of gold the name of him who should sit therein.

Ere they separated the king spoke to them of their land and all they might do for it.

With wise and cheerful words he set before them his thoughts and plans, and they responded gladly. And the archbishop blessed them as they parted, saying in solemn tones,

"May all this Order of the Table Round
Fulfill the boundless purpose of their King!"

Thus was formed this fellowship, this fair order of the Round Table, which was made up of the flower of the knighthood of the time, and was the beginning of a new, bright age when chivalry and honor should triumph over misery and wrong.



PERCEVAL

I

Of Perceval's childhood

In the fellowship of the Round Table when it was founded there were two and twenty vacant seats, and for these places there was striving by many a noble knight. And Arthur was glad, for he welcomed every brave man and true that came to his court.

One of those that came into the fellowship and won great honor, so that he was one of the most famous knights, was Sir Perceval, and his story I am going to tell you as it is written in many ancient books and chronicles. Perceval's father, for whom he was named, was a knight in the days of King Uther. He was beloved by all the court and held in honor by brave knights everywhere. To him the king had given in marriage his sister, the fair Achefleur, and with her he gave great wealth and many broad lands.

When the fair Achefleur and the mighty Perceval were married there was great rejoicing in the land, and after the wedding there was appointed a jousting at the court to which all the knights of the realm were bidden. There at that tourney, while his lady sat on the wall and beheld him, Sir Perceval did great deeds. Knight after knight rode up to tilt with him, and every one turned back crestfallen with his shaft broken. Sixty shafts Sir Perceval broke that day, and many a knight he unhorsed and bare out of his saddle. Among those whom he defeated was a powerful and famous knight, known by the color of his armor as the Red Knight. When the tourney was done they gave Sir Perceval the prize, for he was best worthy, and he bore it to his bride, who was right joyful over the honor in which her lord was held. All gave him praise, for he had proved himself the best knight — all save the Red Knight. He had never been unhorsed since he entered the lists of knighthood, and he rode sullenly away, thinking evil in his heart against Sir Perceval.

For a year Perceval dwelt quietly at home with his lady. Then a son was born to them. (It is he who is the hero of our tale.) They named him Perceval after his father, and so greatly did the father rejoice that a boy child had been born to him, that he made a great feast and appointed a jousting which should follow it. When the Red Knight heard that he was right glad. In all haste he put on his armor and rode thither.

On the first day of the tourney Sir Perceval did passing well for the love of his young son. Knight, duke, baron, and earl he bore down before him, and all who looked on praised his skill and called him the best knight that was there. But on the second day the Red Knight came, and there before the eyes of all he slew Sir Perceval. When he had done that wicked deed he turned his horse and rode away, and none dared bid him abide, for he had slain the best of them all.

Sorely did the lady Achefleur grieve when they brought home Sir Perceval dead, and in that hour of her sorrow she made a mighty

resolve, that her young son should never take part in any tourney. Deeds of arms and skill of sword he should not know, but into the woods she would take him and there she would rear him, far from the sound of battle and tourney.

> "In the woods should he be.
> There should he nothing see
> But the leaves on the tree
> And the groves so gray,
> And with the wild beasts play."

Many sought to hinder her, but she would hear naught of their reasons. Her boy should never know the jousts or tournament that killed his noble father.

The lady Achefleur took her leave of all that she had known. She left behind her bower and hall and went into the wood, taking with her none but the babe, and a maiden who should serve her. Of her goods would she carry none, — not her jewels, nor her silken robes, nor her richly embroidered hangings and tapestries. For these she would have no use, but only for a flock of goats, whose milk

would give her food. Of all her lord's fair gear, his sword and his shield and his costly armor, would she take naught but a little spear that he had used when he was a page. So she went forth, and there in the wood she lived for many a year, and the boy Perceval grew and became strong and tall and

good to look upon. Together they dwelt in a hut in the wildwood, ten leagues from any dwelling.

As the lad Perceval grew he learned much of the lore of the woods. By whistling he could call to him the beasts of the woodland. Never a beast roamed the forest that would not come at his call. He knew many strange secrets about the birds and the flowers and the trees. And he could run swiftly and sling a stone and throw his spear with strength. But of the

world beyond the forest he knew nothing. Of courage and bravery and honor his mother taught him much. All the knightly virtues she instructed him in, but of knightly lore and of arms and of the customs of castle and field she taught him nothing. For fifteen winters they dwelt there, and the lad was fair and tall, and his mother held him passing dear.

As the boy grew older his mother bade him pray to God that He would help him to be a good man.

"Sweet mother," said Perceval, "what kind of a God is this to whom now ye bid me pray?"

"It is the great God of heaven," she replied. "He it is who made the world, and all that dwells therein, birds and beasts and men. He has all power, and is stronger and mightier than any living thing, and more beautiful than aught that ye can ever see. To Him you must pray."

"But where does this great God dwell, sweet mother?"

"Everywhere, my son, in all this world that He has made; therefore can ye pray to Him."

II

Of Perceval's meeting with three knights

As Perceval was walking one day in the woodland many leagues from home, he heard a strange sound. It was the clanking of steel weapons and armor, but Perceval knew it not, for he had never seen a man in armor. Round the turn of the path there rode three knights, and as they rode their coats of mail jingled, and their arms rattled, and their lances clashed upon their shields. When they came in sight the lad was dazzled by their splendor, for the armor glittered from helmet to spur, and the trappings of the horses shone in the sun.

"These are the gods of whom my mother has told me," he thought to himself. "Surely they are more beautiful than aught else in the world, and they shine like the sun."

He was afraid before them and fell upon his knees in the path and began to repeat a prayer.

Straightway the foremost of the knights dismounted (that was Gawain) and said, "My son, who art thou, and what wilt thou?"

The others sat on their steeds and gazed in amazement at this comely lad so strangely clad in a goatskin garment with a goatskin hood.

Perceval answered: "Son am I to the lady that dwelleth in the forest. Tell me which one of you all three is the great God of whom my mother has told me?"

Then Gawain spoke full fair and courteously: "Nay, nay, my lad, hold us not to be gods. We are only knights."

"And what manner of beast may knight be?" quoth Perceval. "For of it I have never heard. Where doth it dwell?"

"Of a faith I will tell thee truly. 'T is a beast that is strong and powerful and mighty above all other beasts, be they man or giant or dragon. And it dwelleth in city and court and highway, wherever fair adventure may be found and brave service done."

"Tell me, Knight-Beast, what dost thou bear on thy head? And what is that which hangeth at thy neck? It is red and shineth in the sun."

Three knights rode into the clearing
In glittering armor bright.

"That which I wear on my head is a helmet made of steel, and this that hangeth from my neck is a shield, banded with red gold."

"But of what use is it?"

"It is to ward off the blow of a sword or lance; but tell me, lad, didst thou never see a man in armor?"

"Nay, kind sir, never; but, I pray thee by thy courtesy, tell me yet one thing more. With what hast thou clad thyself that seemeth to be of many tiny rings?"

"It is a coat of mail; so closely are these rings woven together that the point of a sword cannot pierce between and wound me."

"And what hast thou girt at thy side? Tell me, if thou wilt."

"That is the sword, which is the badge of knighthood," said Gawain, drawing his shining blade from its scabbard. "That is to work against all those who are doing evil in this world, for remember this, my son, the sword of King Arthur is not given for idle combat, but to be wielded in worthy causes, and woe betide that faithless knight that useth it amiss."

"Knight-Beast," quoth Perceval, "could I also become a knight, for I too am a man?"

Then Gawain looked deep into the eyes of the lad, as if he would search his very soul, and said, "Wilt thou be brave and valiant, and never turn back from an enemy?"

"I will."

"Wilt thou flee all wrong as if it were a plague, and follow ever after purity, temperance, and reverence?"

"I will."

"Of a truth, I believe thou wilt," said the knight, "for I never saw fairer lad, nor more honest."

"But how shall I become a knight?"

"A noble king, Arthur, rules in this land, who is the best knight in the realm, and is head over all the knights. By him canst thou be made knight, if he will receive thee. But first thou must go to thy mother and ask her if thou mayest."

And with a word of farewell Gawain rode away with his companions, and the boy stood looking after them until they were out of sight.

III

Of Perceval's return to his mother

When the last sound of clanking armor had died away, Perceval turned and ran toward home in all haste. His mother was awaiting him anxiously, for he had been away longer than was his wont. But as she looked at him she was troubled, and said, "Where have you been, fair son? Tell me what aileth thee."

And the boy answered: "Mother, I will tell thee straight. I have been in the forest, and there I have seen a fair, fair sight."

"What was that, my son?"

"It was a man more beautiful than any I have ever seen. At first I thought him God, but he told me he was a knight. And, mother, I would fain be a knight too, and I must go to King Arthur's court."

Then his mother cried out in her sorrow: "Alas, my son! Long have I labored and much have I striven that thou shouldest know naught of knighthood or of chivalry or of

aught that belongeth to the world of arms. I would choose that thou hadst never heard of it."

"But, mother, sweet mother, may I not go and be a knight?"

"Son, thou art all the comfort I have. God hath left me nothing more, but with thee I was content."

But Perceval heeded not what his mother said, for his thoughts were full of the wonderful sight he had seen.

"Give me to eat," he exclaimed, "for I would away to the court of the king. I tell thee, if I may not be such a knight as I saw, thou shalt have little joy of me henceforward."

The mother knew that it was even as he had said, and she prepared him food that he might be strong for the journey. Garments she could not provide, but he must go in the goatskin garb that she had fashioned for him.

Ere Perceval departed his mother told him many things which he should heed in this new world whither he was going.

"Fair son," she said, "thou wilt go straight to King Arthur, and little thou knowest of hall or bower. Hearken well to what I shall say unto thee. When thou meetest a knight, doff thy hood, for so wilt thou show proper respect. And I pray thee, company not with man or woman save those of gentle birth or breeding. If thou findest anywhere, be it far or near, a lady who is in need, succor her even to the measure of thy life. And wherever thou art, honor thine elders and have respect unto thy king. So shalt thou prosper and be worthy of the knighthood thou seekest."

Then his mother embraced and kissed Perceval, and he went his way. Many days he journeyed over vale and hill till he came to the court of that mighty and courteous lord, King Arthur.

IV

Of Perceval at court

"Yesterday saw I knights three,
Such an one shalt thou make me."

The knights of the Round Table were seated at meat when Perceval came to Camelot; but the lad waited not. Clad in his goatskin coat he strode into the hall, and walked to the head of the board, and doffed his hood. The knights looked up in amazement at this bold youth who ventured thus to enter Arthur's hall, and marveled at his rough garments and his great stature, but above all at his beauty, for the lad was passing fair.

"Friend," quoth the king, "come eat with us. Then shalt thou tell me who thou art and what thou seekest."

"Nay," said Perceval, "I will tell thee before I eat. From the great forest I come, and I would be one of thy knights."

Those who sat by smiled at this bold request, but the king said gently, "What knowest thou of knighthood, my son?"

"Naught know I, save what I learned from one of thine own fair knights whom I met in the forest," and he told him of his meeting with Sir Gawain. (Gawain had not yet returned from his quest.)

As the lad talked, King Arthur looked upon him and marked well his sturdy limbs and his fair body and his honest face, and ever he sought in his mind who the boy might be. There was in his face the likeness to one whom he had seen, but he knew not that he was the son of that famous knight, Sir Perceval, who had been King Uther's friend. Ever as he looked his heart went out to him the more. The lad finished his tale with the words, "Therefore am I come to thee to see if thou wilt make me a knight."

And Arthur answered, "Sit thee down and eat, my son, for thou hast come a long journey. Afterwards I will do with thee what I can, for thou must learn many things before thou canst be a knight."

They brought Perceval to a seat at the foot of the king's table and gave him meat and

drink in plenty. And the lad astonished all by his great appetite, for he had gone long without food. As he ate he gazed about him and saw the shields that hung over each man's seat. Some were richly carved and blazoned, for these knights had done many noble deeds; and others merely carved, and some few were blank, for these belonged to those who had come but lately into the fellowship.

When Perceval had finished he wandered forth from the castle hall and met a knight who stood beside the door. (Him Arthur had sent there to meet the boy.) Perceval doffed his hood as his mother had taught him, and the knight led him away to give him his first lesson in the use of arms.

He took him to a huge armory which was at the side of the court and taught him the names of the weapons. First he gave to him the lance and told him how he should hold that, and then the shield which he must grasp with his left hand to protect himself against the attack of the enemy. When he had showed him these, he asked him, "If you

met a knight and he struck you, what would you do?"

"Strike back!" answered Perceval boldly.

"With what would you strike?"

"With the lance."

"And if your lance broke against his shield or was bent by the force of his charge, what would you do?"

"I would run at him with my fists."

"Ah, no!" said his master. "That you must not do, for that is against the rules of knighthood. You must have a sword and learn to fence with it. That will I teach you next, and then you can attack him with that; but knights fight not with their fists."

Last of all he told him how when he won his arms he must care for them and polish them and never leave them dull or damp, for to leave his arms to rust was the sign of a careless knight.

But ere Perceval laid aside his goatskin coat he was destined to other adventures. When his lesson was done the knight brought him back to the castle hall where King

Arthur and his knights were still sitting about the table, and hardly had they taken their seats when there was a commotion at the door, and into the hall there rode a mounted knight.

Such a knight Perceval had never seen. He was tall and strong, and he was clad all in red. His mantle and his hood, the plume of his helmet, and even the fastenings of his spurs were red. Right into the hall he rode his steed, and from the table in front of the king he seized a cup of rich red gold which was filled with wine. Before them all he drank that wine, and in a loud voice he called them recreants and cowards, both king and knights and all that were assembled. Then, looking neither to right nor to left, he rode out of the hall and left them sitting there.

Before any could move from their places, Perceval rushed from the hall and leaped upon the mare that had brought him to Camelot, and rode after him. Yet he knew not that this was the Red Knight who had slain his father.

Swiftly he rode after him, and when he came near he called loudly to the Red Knight, "How, man on the red steed! bring again the king's cup, or with my dart I will slay thee."

The knight turned to see who was calling to him, and when he saw the boy in goatskin on the mare, he laughed loudly and said, "If thou comest nearer me, thou shalt rue it, thou fool."

So little did he respect him that he lifted the vizor of his helmet, so that he might see him more plainly, and mocked him for his goatskin coat and his beardless face.

But Perceval said, "Whether I be fool or not we shall soon see."

In his hand he held the spear that was his father's, that he had used as a boy in the woods, and he threw it at the knight. Right well did he aim and strongly did he throw, and the spear struck the Red Knight in the eye where he had opened his vizor, and he fell from his horse dead.

Then Perceval came near to despoil him of his armor, but he could not find an opening

anywhere. So cunningly was the armor laced and fastened that the boy could find no way to get within. While he was working at it a knight came up who had ridden after him from the castle hall when he sped away so suddenly. He was the one whom Arthur had appointed to teach the boy and instruct him in the use of arms. He showed him how to unlace the armor and how to slip it off, and when they had disarmed the Red Knight he put it on the boy over his goatskin garments. Thus did Perceval gain his first suit of armor from the knight who had foully slain his father.

That was the first adventure that Perceval had at King Arthur's court. He did not return to the castle hall, but sent back to the king the cup which the Red Knight had stolen, and rode away in quest of adventure. The tales of his brave deeds and of the strange sights that he saw and of the lessons that he learned would fill many books. Ever word of his simplicity and his bravery came to the ears of King Arthur, and one day the king

set out with three of his knights, Gawain, Iwain, and Kay, to find Perceval, whose parentage he had discovered, and bring him back to the court. They met him at a tourney which was being held in the west of England, and they knew him by his red armor, but he knew them not. So they cast lots who should joust with him and the lot fell to Gawain. For an hour the two fought together, and neither could prevail against the other. But Perceval marveled at Gawain's strength and skill and knew him for the best knight he had ever met. At last they broke their spears against each other, and Gawain cried truce, and told Perceval who he was, and brought him to King Arthur and his companions.

"Much have I fought," said Perceval when he stood before the king, "but yet I am not a knight."

There on the spot Arthur made him kneel down before him, and gave him three strokes on the shoulder, and said to him, "Rise, Sir Perceval, loyal knight in the court of King Arthur."

V

Of Sir Perceval and his mother

" Blithe shall I never be
Till I my mother see,
Or know how she fare."

King Arthur urged Sir Perceval to return to the court, where he would make a feasting in his honor; but he remembered his mother and declared that he must find her or he would never be happy again. Before them all he made a vow that he would not ride horse nor wear armor until he had seen her. He laid aside his armor and put on his goatskin coat, and went away into the forest, saying that he would never come out again till he had found her.

Seven days and nights he wandered, and still he could not find her. In all that time he touched neither meat nor drink, so full was he of care. On the ninth day he came to a well which was near his former home, and there he drank. As he went forth refreshed, he came all at once upon her, but she was sorely changed. She stared at him with wild eyes, and cried out, "Alas! such a son once I had."

She began to call and cry,
"Such a son once had I."

Then his heart was lightened, and he took her up upon his back (little was his pride) and ran with her to a castle that was near the edge of the wood. The porter at the gate stared when he saw Sir Perceval, but he let him in, and they wrapped his mother in soft coverings and laid her on a silken couch and gave her a potion to drink. She fell asleep, and there she lay for three days and three nights. In all that time there was no thought in the castle for any but her, and some one watched ever by her day and night.

At last she waked, and the strangeness was gone from her look and her mind was clear. Together Sir Perceval and his mother thanked God, and when she had been clad in soft gray and green robes, Sir Perceval took her home to the court. All welcomed him gladly and gave greeting to the lady Achefleur, who had returned after so many years; and they dwelt there together happily. Sir Perceval had many adventures and did many noble deeds, and came to be one of the chief knights of all the goodly fellowship of the Round Table.

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

I

How Arthur held a feast at Camelot

At Christmastide King Arthur held a high feast at Camelot, and thither came many a comely lord and lovely lady, and all the noble brotherhood of the Round Table. They held rich revels with merriment and glee. Now they would sally forth to joust right gayly together, and again they would make the high hall ring with the sound of carols and dancing. The feast was held for fifteen days with all the mirth that men could devise. Hall and chamber were crowded with the loveliest ladies and the bravest knights that ever lived, and Arthur was the comeliest king that ever held a court.

On New Year's Day a double portion was served at the table of state, and thither came

At Camelot King Arthur lay
Upon that merry Christmas Day.

the king with all his knights from the service in the chapel. They greeted each other for the New Year, and gave rich gifts one to another, and laughed and rejoiced together.

But when they were all served Arthur would not eat, for he had a custom that on a feast day he would neither eat nor drink till he had heard some strange adventure, or knightly deed, or till some stranger knight or distressed damsel had given a challenge or sought redress of the knights of the Round Table. With the sound of trumpets and the waving of banners the first course of that feast was brought in and served, and so great was the abundance that the serving men could scarce find place on the tables for the dainties. Each helped himself as he liked best, but still Arthur sat at the head of the board, and though he made much mirth yet would he not eat.

Suddenly there rushed in at the hall door a man terrible to look upon. He was taller and broader and mightier than any man that was ever seen, so that he seemed as if he

were a giant. Yet he was but a man clad in knight's armor, and the knights marveled most at his color, for he was green all over. His coat and his mantle were of green, and his hood and his hose and all his vestures. And the trappings of his steed were all of green, even to the saddlebow and stirrups, and his horse was green and strong and hard to hold, so that none but a mighty man might ride him. But most marvelous of all were his hair and his thick beard, that were green as any bush.

The knight bore neither shield nor spear nor helmet, but in one hand he held a bough of holly, that is the greenest of all trees in winter, and in the other he bore an ax, huge and uncomely, a cruel weapon with strong staff and sharp, keen blade. He rode into the hall and drove straight to the table of state, which was set on a platform above the rest. He greeted no man, nor looked at any. The first words he spoke were: "Where is the ruler of this assembly? I would gladly look upon that man and have speech with him."

All had sat silent to see so strange a sight as a man and his steed both green as grass, and many had thought this was some fairy prince who had come among them. Whether they were right we shall see.

But Arthur had no fear, and he answered him courteously: "Sir, thou art welcome to this place. Lord of this hall am I, and men call me Arthur. Light thee down and bide awhile, and what thy will is, that shall we learn hereafter."

"Nay," quoth the stranger, "it is not my errand to tarry in this hall; but the fame of thy people and thy city is lifted up on high, and thy men are held the best of all that wear armor. The wisest and the worthiest in the world are they, and well proved in knightly sports. And here, I am told, is fair courtesy; therefore have I come hither, bearing the holly bough in peace. For had I chosen to journey in warlike guise, I have at home both shield and helmet and spear. But if ye be as bold as all men say, ye will grant me the boon I ask."

"Sir knight," said Arthur, "if thou cravest battle here, thou shalt not fail to find a foe."

"Nay," quoth the knight, "I seek no fight. In faith, those on the benches here are but beardless children. Were I clad in armor there is no man here to match me. Therefore I ask in this court but a Christmas jest. If there be any here so bold as to dare me one stroke for another, to him will I give this ax. I will abide the first blow with it unarmed as I am. If any man is bold enough to come to me here and take this ax, I will abide his stroke; but thou shalt give me the right to deal him a stroke in return in a twelvemonth from this day. Now haste, and let us see whether any here dare abide my words."

Then there was a stillness in the hall, and every man pondered these strange words. And the Green Knight gazed at the company from under his bushy green brows and frowned and twisted his beard.

"What!" he exclaimed loudly; "is this Arthur's hall, and are these the knights

whose prowess is told in many realms? Is the Round Table overthrown by one man's speech, since all keep silence for dread ere ever they have seen a blow?"

With that he laughed so loudly that the blood rushed into the king's fair face; he waxed wroth, as did all his knights, and sprang to his feet, and said: "Foolish is thy asking, and as thy folly has asked so shalt thou be answered. Give me thine ax, and I will grant thee the boon thou hast desired."

But ere the king had finished speaking, Gawain, his nephew, had knelt before him and besought that this favor be granted him, that he rather than his lord take up the challenge; for though he was less mighty, yet would his loss be therefore less felt. And all the knights rose and spoke with one voice that the king should leave this adventure to Gawain.

Gawain stepped to the stranger and took from his hand the ax, and the Green Knight asked him, saying, "What is thy name?"

"Gawain am I," quoth the knight; "I give thee this buffet, let what may come of it, and

at this time twelvemonth I will take another from thee."

"That pleaseth me well," said the Green Knight.

"But where shall I seek thee?" said Gawain.

"That will I tell thee when I have taken the blow."

The Green Knight bared his neck and bowed his head, and Gawain let fall the ax with a mighty blow. Straight through the neck it smote, and the head fell to the ground, but the Green Knight faltered not nor fell. With his hand he lifted the head and stepped into the saddle, still holding it; and behold! as he turned the face to Gawain the lips moved, and it said: "Come thou to the Green Chapel, Gawain. Seek it till thou find it. There shalt thou receive a blow on New Year's Day. Come, or thou shalt ever be called a recreant."

With that he turned his bridle and rode out of the hall, and all marveled. Though Arthur was astonished in his heart, yet he gave no

sign of it, nor did Gawain. But the king spake to the ladies, saying: "Be not dismayed. Such craft is well suited to Christmastide, when we seek wonders and jest, laughter and song. Now I may get me to meat, for I have seen a marvel I may not soon forget."

Then the king and the good knight Gawain sat down at the board, and men served them with a double portion, as was fitting for the noblest. With minstrelsy and holiday making the day wore away, and none spoke of the strange sight they had seen, but it lay ever in the minds of Gawain and King Arthur.

II

How Gawain set out on his quest

Now the year passed quickly, winter and spring and summer. With the autumn Sir Gawain bethought him oft of the dangerous journey that was before him. On Allhallow's Day Arthur made a great feast for his nephew's sake, and though they jested together and spoke no word of it, yet all were in sorrow for fear of what might befall that gentle knight.

After the meat Gawain turned to his uncle and said: "Liege lord of my life, leave from you I seek. Ye know without more words what must be. To-morrow am I bound to set forth in search of the Green Knight."

Then all the noblest knights came together, both Lancelot and Perceval and Kay and many another. They drew near to Gawain, and there was much sorrow that so worthy a knight should go weaponless to seek a deadly blow. But Gawain made ever good cheer and said, "Nay, wherefore should I shrink back? What may a man do but try his fate?"

All day he dwelt there with Arthur, and on the morrow he arose betimes and asked for his armor, and they brought it to him. First a rich carpet was stretched over the floor, and the knight stepped thereon. He was clad in a doublet of silk with a close hood furred with

costly skins. Then they put steel shoes upon his feet, and wrapped his legs with steel casings and polished kneecaps clasped with gold. They cased his thighs in armor and brought him a coat of mail of bright steel rings sewed on a fair stuff. With elbow-pieces and polished braces and gloves of mail they covered him, and all the goodly gear that

should shield him in his need, and over it all they cast a rich robe of red velvet whereon was emblazoned in precious stones his coat of arms. When they had set on his spurs of gold, that none but the highest knights might wear, and had girt on his sword with a silken girdle, he was fully clad; and his harness was costly, for the least loop or latchet gleamed with gold. Then went he to the chapel and made his prayer and laid his offering on the altar, and afterwards he came before the king and took leave of him and all the lords and ladies.

With that Gringalet, his steed, was ready, and all his trappings and his saddle and his bridle shone with gold.

And Gawain took his helmet and set it on his head and fastened it, and he grasped in his hand his shield which was of bright red, whereon was painted a knot of gleaming gold. Now was Sir Gawain ready, and he took his lance and bade them all farewell, as he thought forever. He smote his steed with his spurs, and he sprang on his way so swiftly that the sparks flew from the stones after him.

III

What befell Gawain on his way to the Green Chapel

By many a wild road Sir Gawain made his way, inquiring ever after the Knight of the Green Chapel, but none had heard of him. It would take too long to tell the tenth part of his adventures. He fought with dragons and wolves, with wild boars and bulls, with men and giants. Had he not been a doughty knight and brave he would doubtless have been slain on the road.

On Christmas eve as Gawain rode through a wood he saw before him a fair castle, standing on a mound and surrounded by a moat. Then was he right glad, for the way had been lonely and night was falling, and he rode gayly toward the great gate. But the bridge over the moat was drawn up and the gates were shut fast. The walls of that castle were strong and thick, and they were set deep in the water and rose aloft to a great height. They were of heavy stone, carved beneath the battlements with fair carvings, and turrets

were set in the walls with many a loophole. A better castle for defense Sir Gawain had never seen, but he thought it fair enough if he might find shelter there that night. So he called aloud, and there came a porter and greeted the knight and asked him his errand.

"Good sir," quoth Gawain, "will you go to the high lord of this castle and crave for me a lodging?"

"Yea," quoth the porter, "in sooth I trow you will be welcome to dwell here so long as you like."

Then he went and came again swiftly, and many folk with him, to receive the knight. They let down the drawbridge, and came and knelt down on the cold earth to give him worthy welcome, and then they opened wide the gate, and he bade them rise, and rode over the bridge. Men held his stirrup while he dismounted, and took and stabled his steed. Knights and esquires came to bring him into the castle hall, and when he raised his helmet, many stood ready to take it from his hand, and his sword and shield as well.

Sir Gawain gave them all good greeting, and they led him, clad in his fair armor, to the hall, where a great fire was burning brightly on the hearth; and the lord of the castle came forth to meet the knight.

"Ye are welcome," he said, "to do here as ye like. All that is here is your own, to have at your will and wish."

Of all the welcome that they gave Sir Gawain in that castle I would fain tell you, but ye may well believe that they rejoiced when they found that Sir Gawain, of the court

of King Arthur, had come to keep Christmas with them. They put on him rich robes, and served him many dainties, and one said to another, "Now shall we see courteous manners and hear noble speech, since here we have welcomed the fine father of knightly courtesy."

When evening was come the lady of the castle came to greet him, and she was wondrous fair in face and figure and coloring. When Gawain saw that fair lady, who looked on him graciously, he took her lightly in his arms and kissed her courteously and greeted her in knightly wise. She hailed him as a friend, and he quickly begged to be reckoned as her servant, if she so willed. With gay words and merry games they passed that evening together, and the lord and his lady thought only how they might gladden their guest, the noble knight.

To tell of the joy of that Christmas feast that they held on the morrow would take too long. Three days they feasted, but on the fourth day Gawain would bid his kind host

farewell. The lord asked him full courteously what errand had driven him forth from King Arthur's court at this time of joy and gladness.

"Ye say well," answered Gawain. "'Tis a high quest only that could have driven me forth. I am summoned to a certain place, and I know not where in the world I may find it, and there must I be on New Year's morn. Tell me truly if ye ever heard of the Green Chapel, and the Green Knight that keeps it, for I have sworn a solemn compact to be there in three days' time, and I would as fain fall dead as fail of mine errand."

Then the lord laughed merrily and said: "Now must ye surely stay, for I will show you the Green Chapel. Ye can take your ease till the fourth day, for 't is not two miles hence."

At that word was Gawain glad, and he laughed gayly and said, "Now is my quest achieved, and gladly will I tarry at your will and do as ye ask."

To his lady the lord sent word that Gawain would stay with them, and she came, and they rejoiced together. In merry jest the lord said

to Gawain before his lady, "Ye have promised to do the thing I ask you; will ye hold to this word?"

"Yea, forsooth," said the knight, "while I abide in your castle I am bound to do your behest."

"Ye have traveled far," said the host, "and since ye have been with me ye are not refreshed by rest and sleep. Ye shall therefore abide in your chamber these three days, and go to meat with my wife, and she shall sit with you and care for you; and I shall arise early and go a-hunting."

To this Sir Gawain agreed full courteously.

"But listen, Sir Knight," quoth the lord, "we will make a covenant. Whatsoever I win in the wood shall be yours, and whatever ye shall achieve, that shall ye give to me. Let us swear to make this exchange, whether it be for better or for worse for each one of us."

"I grant you your will," quoth Gawain. "Be it as you like."

And so it befell three days. Each morning the lord rose early and went to the hunting,

and each morning the lady of the castle came to Gawain and entertained him. Ever the lady made as though she loved him, and ever he turned her speech aside, for he was a courteous knight and true. On the first day ere she went from him she kissed Gawain full courteously. When the lord returned at even and showed Gawain the spoil of that day's hunting, and gave it to him, he asked what the knight would give in return, as the covenant went.

With that Gawain clasped his hands about the lord's neck and kissed him full courteously, and said, "Take here my spoils; no more have I won."

And the lord laughed merrily and said, "'T is good; I thank thee therefor."

Yet another day my lord went a-hunting and Sir Gawain rested at home. And this day the lord brought home a huge wild boar that he had taken. So mighty a beast had Gawain never seen. And this night Gawain gave the lord two kisses in token of those that his lady had given to him. And once

more they jested together, but the knight begged leave to start on his journey, for the time was near when he must come to the Green Chapel.

"Nay, nay," said his host. "As I am a true knight, ye shall come there on New Year's Day. Twice have I tried you and found you true, but the morrow shall be the third day and the best."

On the third day the lady would bid Gawain farewell, and she entreated him that he take with him to the court of Arthur some token of their friendship. First she begged him to give her his glove or some slight token, and he would not, for it accorded not with his honor to give gifts when he was on so dangerous a quest. Then she offered him a ring, but he refused it. Then she was sorely vexed and said, "If my ring be too costly, and ye will not be beholden to me, take of your courtesy this girdle." From her side she unloosed a girdle braided of green silk.

Gawain refused full courteously to take the girdle or any gift whatsoever, be it never so

slight, but told her that through heat or cold he would be her servant, for he was dearly beholden to her for her kindness and hospitality.

"You refuse this silk," said the lady, "and it is simple in itself; but if any knew the virtue that is knit into it, he might value it more highly. He who is girded with this green lace cannot be wounded nor slain by any might or magic on earth."

Then Gawain bethought him of his adventure in the Green Chapel, when he must unarmed receive a deadly blow. Could he so order it that he come forth unslain, that were worth the trying by any craft. She pressed the girdle upon him yet once more, and he took it, and agreed at her request that no man should know of it.

That night Gawain kept not all of his covenant, for he kissed the lord as was his wont, but he said naught of the girdle. Ere they slept he took leave of them all and thanked them for their courtesy, and each found it as hard to part from that knight as if he had dwelt with them ever.

IV

What happened at the Green Chapel

On New Year's morn, ere it was yet light, Sir Gawain arose and armed himself, and he forgot not the girdle, the lady's gift, but wrapped it around him twice.

With that Sir Gawain set forth with the servant who should show him the way. They climbed over high hills and rode along steep and dangerous paths until it was sunrise. Then the man who rode beside him drew rein and said: "I have brought you hither, and now ye are not far from the place ye seek. But I tell you, since I love you well, the place whither you go is accounted full perilous, and he who liveth there is the worst man upon earth. None enters the Green Chapel that he does not kill him, and never does he show mercy. Therefore, good Sir Gawain, let him alone and go by some other path, and I will hie me home again. By God and all the saints I swear I will keep counsel faithfully, and never let it be told that ye fled."

Gawain thanked him, but would hear no more of such words, and the man bade him farewell sadly, for he would go no farther into the Green Knight's lands for all the gold upon earth.

Gawain spurred his horse and rode on until he came into a dale. No chapel could he see, but rough, overhanging crags, and high, desolate banks. It was an ill-looking place. He dismounted and walked about to see if he might find a chapel, and he found none. But he came to a hollow in the hill, — whether it was a cave or a crevice he knew not.

"Verily," quoth Gawain, "can this be the Green Chapel? In faith it is an ugly place, and well suited to witchcraft and magic."

As he roamed about he heard a frightful noise. It was as if some one were grinding on a grindstone. "I trow," quoth Gawain, "that is the knight, preparing his gear for me." And he called loudly: "Who waiteth here to give me tryst. Now is Gawain here. If any man willeth aught of him, let him come hither quickly, now or never."

"Stay," quoth the other, "and ye shall have quickly what I promised you."

The Green Knight leaped down from a crag, bearing in his hand a mighty ax. It was that he was sharpening on the grindstone.

"Welcome, Sir Gawain," he cried. "Thou hast timed thy coming as befitteth a true knight. Have off thy helm now, and take thy pay. Make no more talking over it than I did with thee."

"By God," quoth Gawain, "I shall make no complaint over what may befall."

So Gawain bared his neck, and the Green Knight made ready. With all his force he raised his grim weapon aloft with a feint of striking the knight dead. Had the ax fallen straight it would have slain him. But as it came gliding down, Gawain shrank a little with his shoulders. The other stopped the blade in its course, and reproved him, saying: "Thou art not Gawain, who is held so valiant, for thou shrinkest for fear before thou feelest hurt. Such cowardice heard I of him! My head fell to my feet, yet I flinched not."

"I shrank once," said Gawain, "yet will I no more, though if *my* head fall on the stones I cannot replace it."

"Have at thee, then," said the other, and heaved aloft his sword and struck at him fiercely; but he stopped the ax once more before it might strike Gawain.

Gawain abode the stroke and flinched in no limb, but stood as still as a stone.

Then the man in green spake gayly, "Now thou that hast thy heart again, it behooves me to smite thee."

"Thou dost threaten too long," said Gawain angrily. "Methinks thy heart misgives thee."

"Forsooth," quoth the other, "thou shalt wait the end of thine errand no longer."

Then he made as if to give a mighty blow, and let the ax fall lightly on the bare neck; yet it did no more than to sever the skin on one side, so that the blood ran over Gawain's shoulder to the ground. When the knight saw the blood on the snow he leaped swiftly and put on his shield, and drew his sharp sword, and spoke boldly, "Stop, Knight, bid me take no more blows, or I will requite thee with a like blow, for every one thou smitest."

Then the Green Knight rested on his ax, and looked at Gawain, and spoke merrily in a loud voice: "Be not so fierce, bold sir. No man hath done thee wrong. Three strokes have I given thee, as befitted our covenant. Once for the first night, and this time I hurt thee not, for thou didst keep our word. Again for the second day, when as a true man thou didst make return, and this time I made a feint to hit thee and hurt thee not.

But the third time thou didst fail, and therefore didst thou have this blow, for 't is my girdle that thou wearest, and mine own wife wrought it. Well do I know her ways, for I sent her to tempt thee and try thee; and in sooth I think thee the most faultless knight that ever trode the earth. As a pearl is of more worth than white peas, so is Gawain by other knights. But thou didst lack a little, Sir Knight; yet that was for no evil work, but because thou lovedst thy life; therefore I blame thee less."

The other stood for a great while, sorely angered with himself. The blood flew to his face and he shrank for shame as the Green Knight talked. The first words that he spake were, "Cursed be cowardice, for therein lie villainy and vice."

And he unloosed the girdle and gave it to the knight, saying, "I was faulty and false, and have been afraid. I avow to thee that I have done ill; now do thy will."

But the other laughed and said gayly: "Thou hast confessed clean and hast borne

the weight of my ax as penance. I hold thee as if thou hadst never been guilty. And this girdle I give thee to keep as a token of the adventure of the Green Chapel. Now shalt thou come again to my castle and pass the rest of the feast in gladness."

"Nay," quoth Gawain, "I thank thee for thy courtesy; commend me to that courteous lady, thy fair wife; but I cannot return. As for the girdle, I will take it with good will, not for the silk or the woven gold, but in token of my fault. I shall look upon it when I ride in renown, and remind myself of my frailty."

So they bade each other farewell, and Gawain rode swiftly to the king's hall, but about his side and knotted beneath his left arm he bare the girdle of green silk woven with gold.

Joy awakened in the dwelling of King Arthur when that knight came to court. The king kissed him, and the queen, and many of the brave knights. They asked him how he fared, and he told them all that had happened

to him. Last of all he showed them the girdle, and the blood flew to his face for shame as he told the tale.

"Lo, here, my lord," he said, and he handed Arthur the girdle, "is the bond of my blame, the token of my cowardice. And I must needs wear it as long as I live, for none may hide his harm, but undone it may not be."

Then the king comforted the knight, and all the court, both the lords and ladies and every knight of the Round Table, agreed with one accord that every one should wear a bright green girdle for the sake of Gawain. To this was agreed all the honor of the Round Table, so that he who wore the green girdle should henceforth be honored the more.

Thus it is told in the book of the adventures of King Arthur's court.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

"And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd."

Many brave knights came into King Arthur's fellowship, and they wrought together and conquered all the land and did many good deeds. Courtesy and justice and honor flourished in those days. But there came a time when the goodly fellowship was scattered. While Arthur was absent from his court there appeared to the knights as they sat in the castle hall a strange vision of the Holy Grail, which was a sacred vessel that none but the purest might see. When the vision was past the knights had sworn with binding vows that they would follow the quest for that Holy Grail until they had looked upon it, for it had seemed to them to

be veiled in a cloud and they would see it plainly. One by one they took the vow, Perceval and Gawain and Lancelot, and Galahad, that pure knight.

When King Arthur returned to the hall he was sorely grieved and said: "Woe is me, my knights! Had I been here, ye had not sworn that vow."

But Perceval answered him and said, "My king, hadst thou been here, thou wouldst have sworn thyself."

Then the king spoke to them sadly and said: "Nay, ye are not all Galahads, or even Percevals, to have these holy visions and follow sacred quests. Ye are men with strength and will to right wrongs and succor those in need. Go, for your vows are made, but think how often in this hall, whither flock the needy in all my realm, the chance of noble deeds will come and go unchallenged, while your places are vacant at my side."

So the king spoke, and so it befell; for while the knights of the Round Table were gone on that holy quest, — and many saw

wondrous sights and gained for themselves great holiness thereby, — there rose up enemies to Arthur in the land, and they plotted against him to drive him from his throne. And Arthur gathered all his forces and went forth to do battle with his foes; and there in that battle he was sore wounded, so that he knew that he must die, and only the bold Sir Bedivere was with him. And Arthur bade him help him to the water side, and there before them stood a barge whereon were three fair queens.

And Arthur said, "Place me in the barge"; and they laid him gently on the deck, and the queens cared for him.

Then Sir Bedivere cried out, saying, "Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me, now that you go from me, and leave me here alone?"

"Comfort thyself," said the king, "and do as well as thou mayest, for I go to the vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound."

So the barge passed slowly away from the bank and up the river, and Arthur was seen

no more by mortal men. But some there are who say that he is not dead, but will come again when all the world is ruled by chivalry, for though King Arthur and his noble knights passed from the earth, yet the spirit of their life and deeds did linger many hundred years, and many followed in their way, and do still follow even unto the present time. And ever when men speak of knightly deeds, Arthur is held in honor and loving remembrance, for he was the

> "first of all the kings who drew
> The knighthood-errant of that realm and all
> The realms together under him, their Head,
> In that fair Order of the Table Round,
> A glorious company, the flower of men,
> To serve as model for the mighty world,
> And be the fair beginning of a time."

ROLAND, A KNIGHT OF FRANCE

I

Of the childhood of Roland, and of his meeting with Charlemagne

In the days of old, when every morning brought adventure and every noonday the hope of winning knightly fame, there ruled in Europe a mighty Christian emperor called Charles. At first he had been king of only the realm of France, but as the years went by he had so extended his power that on Christmas Day, in the year 800, he was crowned at Rome emperor of all the kingdoms of Europe save those that were held by the northern barbarians or the heathen peoples from the East. So well and wisely did this Emperor Charles rule his mighty realm, that before many years were gone men spoke of him and wrote of him always as the great Charles, and they said it so often

that it became part of his name, and everywhere and for all time he came to be known as Charlemagne, which is to say Charles the Great.

It is of an adventure that came to Charlemagne when he was journeying from France to Italy on his way to be made emperor, that I would tell you. All along the route which he was to take, the report had gone out that the mighty Charlemagne was coming, and crowds had flocked to the roadside to see the famous king go by with his escort of dukes and lords and barons and earls, who were reckoned the most valiant company of knights in Christendom.

Of all those who awaited the coming of the king, none were more eager than two half-grown lads who stood on a hilltop near Sutri in northern Italy and watched the long file of heralds and soldiers in armor, who made up the advance guard of the army, march up the winding road that led to the little village. They were a strange couple, these two, the one dark-haired and graceful

in the velvet suit which he had donned for this feast day, and which set off his slender figure well, the other strong and handsome but clad in ragged garments, and with unkempt flaxen locks streaming in the wind.

Yet the rough clothes of Roland, the village boy, could no more hide an air of distinction with which he carried himself than could the rich garments of Oliver, the governor's son, conceal the lithe strength of his young body.

The villagers never ceased to wonder that the governor allowed his son to be seen with Roland, but it had come about in this wise: Roland was the strongest of the village boys, and they made him their leader and champion, who should settle the unending feud which existed between them and the boys of high station, of whom Oliver was the leader. In a wrestling match the two had fought it out, and though the contest was long and close, Roland had finally thrown his opponent. But Oliver, being a courteous lad as well as strong, rose to his feet and declared that Roland had proved himself the better, and that so much did he admire his valor, that he would fain be friends with him. And there began a friendship which was to last as long as Roland and Oliver should live, and was to be sung in many languages and told by many chroniclers.

Thus it came about that Roland and Oliver watched from a hilltop in Sutri the coming of the army, and shouted themselves hoarse when the king himself came in sight,

mounted on a prancing charger and surrounded by the twelve peers who were the best of all his knights and whose fame had spread throughout all Christendom. But after the king had passed, Oliver must needs hasten to the village green, where a feast had been set for the king, and the governor's son must serve as one of the pages who passed the heaping platters and bore the silver tankards of rich red wine. Roland turned his face to go to the cave where he and his widowed mother dwelt in sad poverty outside the village walls, but as he went he came upon a line of the emperor's servants bearing trays of dainty viands to the table. For many days Roland and his mother had been living on crusts of bread and goat's milk, for the winter was hard and food scarce, and the sight of meat drove from the boy's mind all remembrance of aught but his hunger and his mother's sufferings. He rushed upon the men, and snatching the plates from their hands, made away with them with such speed that before they realized what had happened he was out of sight.

When the emperor was told of the boy's deed, he sat silent, buried in thought, and all at the table waited, fearing lest the lad be severely punished for his bold act; but Charlemagne was thinking of a dream which had troubled him for three nights. He had seen the fierce, starving boy seizing the food, and had been warned to follow him. He dispatched three knights to find the boy and bring him into his presence. They had little difficulty in finding him, for every one in the village knew Roland; but when they came to the cave he met them, and told them fiercely that none should enter the cave, uninvited, to harm his mother, but should receive first a blow from his cudgel. His mother calmed the angry boy and invited the messengers to enter.

That was a time of surprise for young Roland, for when the knights saw the boy's mother, they knew her to be no peasant woman but a lady of high rank, and they bowed low before her, and told her that King Charles, who was to be crowned emperor at

Rome, desired the presence of her son. And Roland's mother wept when she heard the name of Charles, and told the knights that she was his own sister, the lady Bertha, who had fled from the court many years before because her royal brother would not give her leave to marry a poor but noble knight, by the name of Milone. They had escaped together to Italy, and had hidden in this cave to wait till the spies of Charlemagne should have returned from searching for them. There Roland had been born, and from there Milone had departed when the heathen Saracens had come to the very gates of Rome to take her, and every knight in Christendom had been summoned to defend the faith and save the city. In that battle he had been killed, and for all the years of Roland's childhood his mother had lived on in the cave, subsisting as best she might. Then the knights knelt before the sister of Charlemagne and gave her homage, and entreated her that she let them bring the boy into the royal presence and sue for pardon for them both. But

Roland sat as in a dream as he heard of his royal lineage, and marveled that the mighty king, whom he had looked upon that very morning, was his uncle.

The knights led Roland into the king's presence, and the boy stood proudly before Charlemagne, and bore himself so well that all who looked on wondered at the appearance of this peasant boy. When he heard the story of the messengers, Charlemagne's heart yearned over the boy, who was his only sister's son, and he embraced him and welcomed him to his court. An escort of noble knights brought the Lady Bertha to the king, and from that time forth Roland and his mother belonged to the king's household. They journeyed with him to Rome, and every day Charlemagne rejoiced in the proud bearing of the lad, and in his strength and courage. When they returned to France, Roland was given over to the care of Duke Namo, who should take the lad and train him as a page in his household.

II

Of Roland as page, esquire, and knight

As a page in the household of Duke Namo, Roland began his knightly education in company with a group of noble youth who had come there for that purpose. It was hard for the freedom-loving boy, who had been under no tutelage but that of his gentle mother, to adapt himself to the castle life, but he set himself sternly to learn those first lessons of the page, "Obedience and Service," and won golden opinions from the lord and lady of the castle; for of all the pages none was so eager to learn, and none so ready to run with messages or wait upon the duke's guests, and none so quick to serve at table. The ladies of the court taught him courtesy, and he responded with gallant service and pretty speeches, until the duke reported to his uncle, the emperor, that the lad was the favorite of all the household, as well as his most promising pupil.

One day Roland was wild with delight, for his master had told him that he was to be

made an esquire (for he was already fourteen years old). The lady Bertha might well be proud of the tall, flaxen-haired lad who stepped from the ranks of the pages when his name was called and exchanged the short dagger of the page for the sword of the esquire. Henceforth he was no longer a child, but a youth, whose duties would all be turned toward the profession of knighthood for which he was being trained. Once more he was assigned to the care of Duke Namo, and with him was placed a boy a few years older than he, who was his favorite of all the pages with whom he had been associated. This was Ogier the Dane, son and heir of the king of Denmark, who had been delivered to Charlemagne by his father as a pledge that Denmark would continue to render homage to him as emperor. Together the boys learned the duties of esquireship, caring for the armor of their lord, equipping his horse for him when he would go abroad, and attending him on every journey; together they were trained in the feats of knighthood,

and together they listened to the tales of Bernardo the old armorer, who told of battles and tourneys and deeds of valor. And the boys lamented because the times were peaceful, but the old man said, "Never fear, young sirs; your time will come."

One day there came from Charlemagne a summons to arms. The Saracens from the East had landed in Italy, and were marching on Rome. Duke Namo waited scarcely an hour before he set out for the place of meeting, and Roland and Ogier went in his train.

Of that swift march and of the mighty army I will not speak. In one short week the mountains were crossed, and Charlemagne was face to face with his heathen foe.

The advance guard of the army was given to Duke Namo to command, and behind him, on a rise of ground where they could watch the battle, were his esquires. Should the duke become unhorsed, or should he lose any of his weapons, it was for them to rush to his assistance. In the forefront of the army rode Charlemagne, and at his right hand rode

Alory, a knight of Lombardy, to whom the emperor had given the Oriflamme, or royal standard, to bear, for the battle was taking place in the province of Lombardy. This was the greatest honor knight could have, but Alory proved himself sadly unworthy of it.

When the combat was at its height, one division of the army became separated from the rest, so that Charlemagne was in danger and the outcome of the fight in that place was uncertain. All of a sudden the esquires saw Alory lower his banner and turn his horse in flight, leaving Charlemagne and a few brave knights alone in the midst of a band of Saracens.

Right into the arms of the esquires Alory rode, fleeing blindly and caring not where he went if only he could escape from the battle. But Ogier had seen his cowardly act, and he seized his bridle and stopped him, crying: "Stop, Alory! Are you conquered? Where is the king? How have ye left him?"

"The king is taken. The French are cut off and killed," wailed Alory in terror.

"You lie. Rather have you failed him in his hour of peril," cried Ogier, and he tore off Alory's armor, felling him with a blow of his fist, and put it on with all speed, calling to his fellow esquires to follow his example.

"Shame be on any, Ogier, who shall fail thee!" they cried, and they fell upon the retreating Lombards who had followed Alory, and armed themselves from their weapons as best they might. He who could not find a lance broke a staff of apple tree or ash. Their linen shirts they tore for pennons, and Ogier rode at the head in ill-fitting armor, but bearing the royal standard with its golden cords, and next to him rode Roland.

When the esquires reached the place where Charlemagne had been, they could not see him, for the center of the battle had changed and the emperor had been driven from his stand by the onrush of the enemy. When they reached him he was in the midst of the Saracens, who had come upon him from behind, and he and his trusty band of knights

were in grave peril. But their hearts were glad when they heard the cry of Ogier and saw the Oriflamme once more. When the enemy had fallen back a little, Charlemagne found a moment to ride to his standard bearer and say to him, "Brave Alory, I thought thou hadst failed me, but now I see that it is to thee I owe my safety!"

Ogier made no reply, — indeed there was no time, — but plunged once more into the thick of battle, and ere long the Saracens were fleeing in every direction and the heathen horde had been defeated.

Then the Archbishop Turpin laid aside his armor, and standing beside the emperor, gave thanks to God for the victory he had given them. When he had finished, Ogier came in his heavy armor to lay the Oriflamme at the feet of the emperor, and behind him walked a company of warriors who were burdened by their ill-fitting armor. Ogier knelt before Charlemagne, who embraced him, calling him Alory, from his armor, and thanked him for his aid in the moment of

danger. But Roland, his nephew, could no longer abide this error. He threw off his helmet and unfastened that of Ogier, and all the young esquires that stood with them did likewise.

No chronicler has ever been able to picture the astonishment and joy of the great emperor as he looked upon these youthful warriors. There on the battle field he had the soldiers lay a rude altar, whereon were placed two shining swords. The archbishop blessed the weapons, and the emperor bade Ogier and Roland kneel before him. With his famous sword, Joyeuse, Charlemagne dealt them each the accolade, which is to say, three blows on the shoulder.

" The king he lifted his famous blade,
A blow on the shoulder of each he laid,
And by that little action a knight he is made,
Baptized into glorious chivalry.
' Bear thou this blow,' said the king to the knight,
' But never bear blow again:
For thy sword is to keep thine honor white,
And thine honor must keep thy good sword bright,
And both must be free from stain.' "

So the twain are there dubbed knight,
Courteous and brave and of great might.

Then Charlemagne called: "Rise, Sir Ogier; rise, Sir Roland, henceforth my loyal knights."

With his own hands he girt on their swords. That was a great honor for these knights.

The name of the sword of Ogier was Cortana, and of Roland, Durindana. In a dream Charlemagne had been told of this sword Durindana which should come to him, how it had once belonged to Hector, prince of Troy, and had been carried by a long line of valiant heroes since that day. And the closing words of that message were: "This sword belongs only to a right valiant captain. See that it goes to him." Now the emperor deemed Roland worthy to carry it.

Then Duke Namo fastened silver spurs on both knights, for they had already won them by their service on their first battle field.

"'Take thou these spurs,' said the duke to the knight,
'And ever keep this in mind,
That as thou wouldst have thy steed mind thee,
That he prompt, and docile and obedient be,
So let thy vows thee bind.'"

So were Roland and Ogier made knights.

III

"A Roland for an Oliver"

There was a custom in the olden days that when there was cause to war between two kingdoms each might choose, if they both so willed, a champion who should meet in single combat the knight chosen by the enemy. Thus would the honor of both parties be satisfied, and long and bloody war be averted.

Such a combat was agreed upon to settle the dispute which had arisen between Charlemagne and one of his Italian vassals; and Roland, who was by this time a full-fledged warrior, was so fortunate as to be chosen for Charlemagne, while one of the Italian lord's grandsons drew the lot to fight for his province. The meeting place was to be an island in a river that ran between Italy and France.

When the appointed day came, Roland was escorted by the knights of Charlemagne to the bank of the river, and rowed out to the island amid the shouts and cheers of the throng that lined the shores. From

the other side of the stream came the Italian champion, and there on that island they met. When those two knights faced each other, clad in the heavy armor that covered them from head to foot, the crowds that lined the shores could not have told, save for the color of the pennons that waved from their lances, which was the French champion and which the Italian, so nearly matched were they in size.

The trumpet sounded, and before the sound of that blast had died away the champions had dashed forward on their steeds, with lances in position, clashed together with a force that shivered both lances and made their horses reel, and passed each other. The first great test of knightly combat had been passed, and neither champion had been unhorsed.

Now they dismounted and drew their swords. For two long hours and more they fought, and neither missed a stroke nor failed to parry a thrust. Those who watched on the shore had never seen such swordplay, nor two champions so equally matched. One would think they would be weary, but they

leaped to their blows as though they were fresh to the combat. While they marveled at Roland's skill, the men of France trembled lest some blow from the sword of this stranger knight should throw the fair pennon of Charlemagne in the dust. And the Italians, as they cheered, whispered one to another in fear lest their hero had met his match.

Suddenly Roland drove forward with so mighty a stroke that he buried his sword Durindana in the shield of his opponent. It went so deep that he could not withdraw it. At the same moment his antagonist struck so fiercely against Roland's breastplate that his sword snapped off at the hilt. Thus were both warriors left weaponless.

Without a pause they rushed upon each other, each striving to throw the other to the ground. Long they struggled, and neither could down the other. Those who watched scarce moved or breathed as they saw that combat. Finally each snatched at the other's helmet to tear it away. Both succeeded, and the two champions stood bareheaded. Then

the men of France and of Italy saw a sight that they could scarce credit. Those two knights, who had fought with all their might for two long hours and more, rushed into each other's arms and embraced. The watchers thought it was some new and deadly move; but no! they stood off and gazed into each other's eyes, and once more they embraced.

Then the knight of Italy shouted in ringing tones, "I yield me to Roland."

And Roland called even more loudly, "I am conquered by Oliver."

And so it was! The stranger knight was Oliver, the friend of Roland's boyhood, from whom he had been separated since that winter day when Charlemagne had passed through the little Italian village and found there his nephew. Now they had fought with one another in deadly combat for nearly three hours.

The knights of France and Italy came with haste to see wherefore the battle had ceased. Some urged that it was the duty of the two champions to renew their strife to settle their countries' quarrel; but neither would hear to it.

"Not for country, nor cause, nor king will I fight the friend of my life," said Roland, and Oliver was with him.

A truce of four days was declared, in which Charlemagne and his rebellious lord should confer through their knights and see whether other champions should be chosen; but in that time, by the efforts of Roland and Oliver, the dispute was peaceably settled. The two friends refused to part, and Charlemagne took Oliver as one of his peers, for he had proved himself worthy of the highest honors of knighthood. Henceforth Roland could not hold his proud place as the best of Charlemagne's knights, but he cared not for that, since he and his beloved Oliver were but equally matched, and neither could do better than the other. So well matched were they that when people of the court would tell that one thing was the equal of another, they said: "They are the same. It matters not which it is. 'T is but a Roland for an Oliver." And it is from those days that the saying has come down to us.

A STEED! A STEED!

A steed! a steed! of matchless speed!
A sword of metal keen!
All else to noble hearts is dross —
All else on earth is mean.
The neighing of the war-horse proud,
The rolling of the drum,
The clangor of the trumpet loud
Be sounds from heaven that come.
And, oh! the thundering press of knights,
When as their war-cries swell,
May tole from heaven an angel bright,
And rouse a fiend from hell.

Then mount! then mount! brave gallants all,
And don your helms amain;
Death's couriers, Fame and Honour, call
Up to the field again;
No shrewish tear shall fill our eye
When the sword hilt's in our hand;

Heart-whole we 'll part and no whit sigh
For the fairest of the land.
Let piping swain and craven wight,
Thus weep and puling aye;
Our business is like men to fight
And like to Heroes, die!

THE BATTLE OF RONCEVAL

I

Of the council of Charlemagne

"The Emperor sits in an orchard wide,
Roland and Oliver by his side;
With them many a gallant lance,
Full fifteen thousand of gentle France.
Upon a throne of beaten gold
The lord of ample France behold;
White his hair and beard were seen,
Fair of body, and proud of mien."

It was the custom of Charlemagne to take counsel of his peers and knights in all matters of weight. Seven years he had waged war against the Saracens in Spain, and one city after another had fallen before him until only one remained unconquered, the stronghold of Saragossa, and there Marsilius, the Moslem king, had taken refuge. Now messengers had come from Marsilius, bearing olive

The Emperor sits in an orchard wide,
Roland and Oliver by his side.

branches of peace, with the promise that if Charlemagne and his army would withdraw from Spain, the king would follow him to France and there offer to him his fealty, embracing Christianity as his religion from that day. King Charlemagne had listened to these fair promises and held his peace, for he was never hasty of speech, and the next morning he had called a council of his knights in the orchard to consult with them in this matter. He told them of the proposal of the envoys, and of the rich treasures of gold and silver, and of the noble hostages which the heathen king offered as token that his words were true.

"Yet," he added, as he ended his words, "I know not what may lie in his heart."

Scarcely had he finished when Count Roland came forward and faced his uncle. His eye flashed with anger.

"Believe not this Marsilius," he cried. "Full seven long years we have warred in Spain, and he hath ever been a traitor. Dost thou not remember the time when he sent

unto thee fifteen of his heathen, bearing olive boughs and speaking the selfsame words as now? Dost thou not remember how thou didst hearken to his words and send two of thy chiefest knights to him, and how he had their heads struck off? War, I say! End as you began. Besiege him in Saragossa. War, I say!"

The Franks were silent when Roland had finished speaking, and the emperor answered him not a word, but bent his head and mused.

Suddenly Count Ganelon leaped to his feet.

"Be not misled, my lord, but look to your own good ends," he cried. "King Marsilius assures us of his good faith, and vows to be your vassal and abide by the Christian law. Who would reject a treaty like this, cares not by what death we die. Good does not come from counsel of pride; listen to the wise, and let the madmen be!"

Then the white-haired Duke Namo arose; there was no better vassal in all the emperor's court than he.

"You have hearkened unto Ganelon, and he speaketh well. King Marsilius is broken and beaten in war. You have captured his castles afar and near; you have broken down his walls, burned his cities, and slain his soldiers. It were a sin to molest him further. Receive his hostages and send him in return one of your Christian knights. We have been too long away from fair France. 'T is time this war ended and we returned to our homes."

"The duke speaketh well," the Franks exclaimed.

"Who then were the best to undertake this mission? said Charlemagne.

"I pray you send me," said the duke.

"Nay," answered the king, "thou art my wisest counselor. Thou shalt never depart so far from me."

"I," said Roland, "will go right gladly."

"Nay," said Oliver, "not so. Thou art too fiery of temper for so perilous a mission. I will go, if the king but will."

"Be silent, both of you," spoke Charlemagne sternly. "Neither of you shall go, nor any

of my twelve peers. My lords," he continued, turning to the men of the council, "choose me a baron who shall do my behest."

"Be it," said Roland, "my stepsire Ganelon. In vain will ye seek for a meeter man."

"Well spoken!" cried the Franks.

And the emperor said: "It is well. Count Ganelon, thou hearest. The Franks have chosen."

"This is Roland's work," said Ganelon, and he trembled with angry passion as he stood there. "For this, I vow I will love him no more. Nor will I love Oliver, for he is his sworn comrade. Nor will I love the peers who so cherish and honor him. I fling defiance at them all."

"Ganelon," said the emperor, "there is too much anger in thy words. Since I command it, thou must go."

"I go, my lord," said Ganelon, but as he bent forward to take the glove which was the token of his being chosen, his anger made him careless, and it fell to the ground before he took it.

"God! what is this?" said the startled Franks as they saw it fall. "Evil will come of this quest."

"My lords, ye shall hear of that anon," said Ganelon in a storm of angry passion. Then, turning to the emperor, "Sire, let me go; since go I must, why should I delay?"

"Go, then, in Christ's name and mine," said Charlemagne.

So Ganelon left the peers and knights of France and went on his journey; but he carried with him an evil heart that boded ill for France.

II

Of Ganelon's treachery

To tell the tale of Ganelon's journey to Saragossa and of the plot that he plotted by the way, — that were too long a tale. The anger in his heart against Roland for sending him on so dangerous a mission, from which, in spite of his words of counsel to Charlemagne, he scarce believed he should return

alive, did so rule him that he forgot his knightliness and his truth and even his honor, and did make with the Saracens a bargain of treachery so base that no man can think of it without a shudder. The heathen were eager to know how long the aged Charlemagne could live and what would become of his kingdom when he died, for Roland was right and there was no good faith behind the fair promises of Marsilius. And Ganelon told them that they could do naught while Charlemagne lived, but that Roland was the real ruler of that land. He it was, he said, who urged the emperor on to his mighty deeds, and he it was to whom the people looked to carry on Charlemagne's mighty empire.

"Whoso bringeth Roland to death," he said, "will take from Charlemagne his greatest strength. His marvelous host will melt away and leave this mighty land in peace."

So he plotted a wicked plot with the heathen, that when Charlemagne should withdraw his troops from Spain Roland should have charge of the rear guard of the army. Then the

Saracens could fall upon him and his men when the rest of the army were past, and kill them. Marsilius fell upon Ganelon's neck and kissed him when he heard this plan of revenge.

So Ganelon returned with fair words on his lips and treason in his heart. Charlemagne was glad when he heard the message of peace, and he said, "Now are my wars done, and we may ride home to fair France."

When the army came to the pass of Ronceval, the emperor said to his knights: "These passes are steep and straight and full of peril if an enemy were in this country. To whom shall I trust the keeping of the rear?"

"To my stepson Roland," answered Ganelon. "You have no other knight like him."

"Thou art a very demon," said Charlemagne. "It seemeth as if rage had possessed thy soul. If I give the rear to Roland to command, who then shall lead my vanguard?"

"Ogier," he replied, "the gallant Dane."

The emperor would not that Roland should hear those words, but Roland heard them, and he stepped forward and said:

"Sir Stepsire, I ought to love thee well that thou hast named me for this honor. I will take good heed that the emperor lose not a charger, nor palfrey, nor mule, nor steed, that is not paid for by stroke of sword."

So it was settled as Ganelon had plotted, that Roland, the first of all the peers and the favorite of Charlemagne's heart, should remain with twenty thousand men and guard the rear of the marching host.

"Through Ronceval the march began;
Ogier the baron led the van;
For them was neither doubt nor fear,
Since Roland rested to guard the rear."

III

Of the coming of the Saracens

"Count Roland sprang to a hilltop's height,
And donned his peerless armor bright;
Laced his helm, for a baron made;
Girt Durindana, gold-hilted blade;
Around his neck he hung the shield,
With flowers emblazoned was the field;
Nor steed but Veillantif will ride;

And he grasped his lance with its pennon's
pride.
White was the pennon, with rim of gold;
Low to the handle the fringes rolled.
Who are his lovers men now may see;
And the Franks exclaim, 'We will follow
thee.'

. . . . . .

Then were mustered King Marsil's peers,
With a hundred thousand heathen spears.
They don their hauberks of Saracen mold,
Wrought for the most with a triple fold.
Bright was the sunshine and fair the day;
Their arms resplendent gave back the ray.

Then sound a thousand clarions clear,
Till the Franks the mighty clangor hear.
'Sir Comrade,' said Oliver, 'I trow
There is battle at hand with the Saracen foe.'
'God grant,' said Roland, 'it may be so.
Here our post for our king we hold;
For his lord the vassal bears heat and cold,
Toil and peril endures for him,
Risks in his service both life and limb.'

Sir Oliver to the peak hath clomb,
Looks far on the realm of Spain therefrom;
He sees the Saracen power arrayed, —
Helmets gleaming with gold inlaid,
Shields and hauberks in serried row,
Spears with pennons that from them flow.
He may not reckon the mighty mass,
So far their numbers his thought surpass.
All in bewilderment and dismay
Down from the mountains he takes his way,
Comes to the Franks the tale to say.

. . . . . .

'I have seen the paynim,' said Oliver;
'Never on earth did such host appear:
A hundred thousand with targets bright,
With helmets laced and hauberks white,
Erect and shining their lances tall;
Such battle as waits you did ne'er befall.
My lords of France, be God your stay,
That you be not vanquished in field to-day.'
'Accursed,' say the Franks, 'be they who fly;
None shall blench from the fear to die.
Death were better than fame laid low.
Our Emperor loveth a downright blow.'"

IV

Of Roland's pride

Ere the paynims came upon them, Oliver spoke to Roland, saying: "My comrade, the enemy are in fearful force, and our Franks are but few. Sound upon thy horn. Then Charlemagne will hear and his host return."

Round Roland's neck hung a magic horn of carved ivory. If he blew upon it in case of need, the sound would be carried over hill and dale far onward to the ears of Charlemagne.

But Roland would not listen to Oliver.

"I were mad to do such a deed. Lost in France were my glory. My Durindana shall smite full hard, and the heathen shall find their fate in this pass."

"Nay, Roland, sound on your horn, that Charlemagne may send his legions back to lend us aid," entreated the wise Oliver. But he pleaded in vain.

The Moslems swept nearer, and Oliver warned Roland again, saying, "Thou seest the heathen foe, how near they are and how

many, and thou knowest how few are we. Thou didst scorn to blow thy horn. The rear guard shall do their last brave feat to-day. Nevermore will they mingle in mortal battle."

But Roland, wild with the joy of combat, cried, "The emperor has left us his bravest men, never a coward heart among them. We shall not fail."

Then Roland rode in front of his ranks of knights, and cried, "Franks, remember your chivalry!" and the Franks responded with the war cry of Charlemagne, "Montjoie! Montjoie!" Proudly they rode at their paynim foes, with shout of victory on their lips.

But Charlemagne rode sadly toward France, for he had dreamed a dream that told him Ganelon was a traitor, and it was Ganelon who had set Roland to guard the pass. As he rode he said sadly to the Duke of Namo, who rode beside him,

> "'Twas he gave Roland to guard the rear.
> God! should I lose him, my nephew dear,
> Whom I left on a foreign soil behind,
> His peer on earth I shall never find."

V

Of the battle

"Wild and fierce is the fight;
Stanch are the Franks with the sword to smite;
Nor is there one but whose blade is red.
'Montjoie!' is ever their war cry dread."

Charlemagne would have gloried in his knights, had he seen them on that day at Ronceval. With sword and lance they dashed upon the Saracens, making havoc in their ranks and slaying those they met in single combat, till it seemed as if there could be none left. Everywhere through the press rode Roland and Oliver, doing marvelous deeds, and the knights were never far behind them. Ensigns and pennons were torn and bloodstained, and many a knight lay dead on that field. The foe fell by thousands, and France, too, was reft in that day of the best of her chivalry. Dearly they sold their lives, but well they knew, as they met that mighty host of warriors, that the fair land of France would see them no more. Such battle was

never seen in all the fierce strife that King Charlemagne had waged in that land, and at last the Saracens turned and fled before the Franks. They could not stand against that onslaught. So the battle was won by the Christian host, — the first battle of that fight, — but, oh! what sorrow remains to tell!

Of the mighty host whom King Marsilius had led into that pass, one hundred thousand lay dead on the field, and with them lay hundreds of gallant knights of the Franks who had sold their lives full dearly for their cause. As Roland and Oliver and those who survived were seeking their dead on the field, they heard a mighty blast of trumpets, and behold! a second heathen host, greater than the one they had vanquished, riding down upon them. Yet went they bravely to the fight again, and the cry of "Montjoie!" sounded forth in the ears of that Saracen foe.

Once more the sound of battle rose; once more the gallant knights met their foe with lance and sword, and alas! once more the ground was strewn with dead. Mighty were

the deeds of valor that were done that day. But one and another fell, until there were but three hundred left of all that company.

As Roland watched Oliver ever in the press of the fight, dealing blow upon blow, his heart went out to him, and he cried aloud, "Oh, my comrade faithful and true, this day shall end our love! this day we shall part on earth forever!"

Oliver heard, and spurred his horse to Roland's side. "Keep near me," he said; "we will die together, if God so will."

Yet the slaughter went on, fiercer and fiercer, till only sixty weary Franks were left. As Roland gazed on his men lying cold in death, and the pitiful little band of sixty who yet remained, his heart was heavy within him, and he cried to his wise companion, "Would God he had been with us, our emperor, Charlemagne! How shall we send tidings to him?"

"I know not," said Oliver.

"I will sound upon my horn," said Roland, "that he may hear."

"You were mad to do such a deed. Lost in France would be your glory," said Oliver, recalling to him his words of the morning.

But Roland's pride was broken, and he repeated, "Nay, I will sound upon my horn."

"Wouldst thou call for aid?" said Oliver, for his heart was bitter within him for the needless slaughter of the chivalry of France.

The good archbishop Turpin heard, and he spake to Roland sadly, saying: "Aye, it were well to sound the call. It will avail us nothing now, but Charlemagne will return to avenge our death and bear our bodies back to gentle France, there to sleep in hallowed earth."

Then Roland raised his horn and sounded a mighty blast. With all the strength in his body he blew, and the blast was borne onward till it came to the ears of Charlemagne. Then, though the traitor Ganelon sought to dissuade him and tell him he had not heard aright, the emperor knew that Roland was in dire distress, and he turned him and all the host. Sadly they rode back with sorrow and fear in their hearts, along the mountain road towards Spain.

Meanwhile Roland had rushed once more into the fight, crying to Oliver, "My brother, I die of grief and shame, if I escape unslain."

Once more he swung his sword with such blows as only he could give, and the heathen gave way before him. But what did it avail? A thousand were pressing on behind. Roland seeing the battalions advancing cried, "Our hour is come!" and even as he spoke a heathen warrior came upon Oliver from behind, while he was dealing out blows to those before him, and thrust him through with his lance.

"Roland, my comrade," cried the dying Oliver, "ride near me; our parting is near."

"O God!" cried Roland in anguish, as he looked upon his friend and saw his ghastly whiteness; "is this the end of thy prowess, my gentle friend? On earth there shall never be such as thou. Ah, France, thou art indeed bereft of thy bravest!"

Then Oliver slipped from his horse and lay stretched on the ground, but ere he passed away he breathed a prayer that God would

bless him, and King Charlemagne, and France, and last of all his brother Roland. So he passed away, and Roland was left alone.

"Since thou art dead, to live is pain," he cried.

Once more he dashed into the press, and fought fiercely. Yet first he raised his horn and sounded it. It was but a feeble blast, for his strength was near gone, but the answer came from sixty thousand clarions, for Charlemagne's host was drawing nearer.

"Charlemagne! Charlemagne!" cried the heathen. "France is upon us. Let us flee!"

And they turned and fled in dire panic from that field; but as they went the bravest of the Moslems hurled their weapons at Roland, for he alone of all the warriors was left. Yet he sank not then before their onset, but when they were gone he knew his end was near. On a mound beneath a pine tree he laid him down to die, but ere he passed away he thought of his good sword Durindana, and he knew that it must not fall into heathen hands.

"Oh, Durindana, my peerless blade,
What victories thou and I have made!"

"Ah, Durindana," he cried, "thou wert given to Charlemagne to belong to a valiant captain, and he girded thee on me. Many regions I have won with thee for him, but now I must leave thee, and thou shalt never fall in heathen hands."

He struggled to his feet and smote with it upon a great rock. Yet had he not strength to break it, but only to bend it past all use.

"That death was on him he knew full well;
Down from his head to his heart it fell.
On the grass beneath a pine-tree's shade,
With his face to earth, his form he laid,
Beneath him placed he his horn and sword,
And turned his face to the heathen horde.
Thus hath he done the sooth to show,
That Karl and his warriors all may know,
That the gentle count a conqueror died.
Mea Culpa full oft he cried;
And, for all his sins, unto God above,
In sign of penance, he raised his glove."

So Charlemagne found Roland lying when he came to Ronceval, with his unsurrendered sword beneath him and his face toward Spain.

GODFREY, A KNIGHT OF THE CRUSADES

I

Of the summons that came to the knights of Christendom

There has never been a time in the world's history when there were not wrongs to be righted and evils to be battled against; nor were the days of chivalry different from other days. Always there were knights who set themselves to defend the right and vanquish the wrong, and always there was work for them to do. In the days of King Arthur there were dragons and giants to fight, and perilous quests into wild regions to be undertaken, and above all there was the honor of the Round Table to be upheld. The foes of Charlemagne and the peers of France were the Moors and Saracens, heathen peoples from the East who would spread over the

fair lands of Europe with their barbarian ways and their strange religion, and kill and drive out the Christian peoples if they were not opposed by a strong and relentless army of warriors. And the knights of that age were victorious and drove out the enemy and saved their country from the hordes of the East, although in the years of that strife the lifeblood of many noble knights was shed.

To the knights of a later day there came yet another call to service, and this was the fashion of its coming. It was a pious custom of that time for men whose sins weighed heavily upon them, or who sought a purity which their lives of strife and bloodshed could not bring them, to lay aside their arms, and putting on the robes of pilgrims, to make long and perilous journeys over land and sea to the sacred places of the Christian faith. But Jerusalem and all the Holy Land were in the hands of the heathen peoples whom Charlemagne and his knights had driven back from Europe. So these pilgrims returned with tales of the shameful treatment

which they had received and of the insolence of the barbarians, who desecrated the holy places and heaped insult and violence upon all Christians. And the hearts of knights everywhere burned at these tales, and they said it was a shame and a disgrace to Christendom that such things should be.

It was in the year 1095, three hundred years after Charlemagne had waged his wars against the Saracens, that Urban, the head of the Christian church, called a great council of all the people of Europe to consider the state of the Holy Land. It was to be held in the little French village of Clermont, and for days before the assembly opened the whole valley was dotted with white tents, for the villages could not accommodate the throngs of travelers who had journeyed thither from Italy and Germany and all of Christendom. No building could hold the multitude of people, so the meeting was held in the great open square of the town, and even then the streets leading in all directions were packed with men and women. Knights in shining

armor stood next to peasants who had left their plows and traveled weary miles afoot to the gathering; nobles in rich robes jostled against monks and priests; highborn ladies stood beside beggars; but none had a thought for any one but the man who stood on the platform in the center of the square. The pope sat there in his gorgeous robes of office, yet the people looked not at him, but at the small man with bare feet and uncovered head, whose coarse hermit's gown was worn and ragged and whose face was thin and haggard from exposure and fasting. This was Peter the Hermit, whose fame had spread over all Europe. A deep silence fell upon the people as he stood forth, with a great wooden cross in his hand, and poured out his story in a voice that was often broken by sobs and tears. He told of the things he himself had seen in the Holy Land. He pictured the horrors which were practiced there by the infidels who ruled the city in the pride of their bloody conquest. He himself had stood by and seen the holy places profaned and

mocked, and Christians loaded with irons and dragged away to slavery and death. Ministers of God were torn from the churches and beaten with rods. None were safe from the lustful hands of the heathen.

He paused and stood for a moment with bowed head before the people. Then in a ringing voice he cried out: "Men of Christendom, I tell you these things shall end. I have had a vision, and in that holy place itself I heard the voice of God, and these were the words that came to me: 'Arise, Peter, go hastily to thine own land and call upon the people, telling what thou hast seen. The time has come when my holy city shall be cleansed and my people saved.' Arm yourselves, therefore, ye men of Christendom, and prepare for war, for these things shall not be."

As Peter sank back, worn out with emotion, Pope Urban rose and spoke to the weeping multitude: "Yes, brethren, weep for your sins and this evil which has come upon Christendom. But weeping is not enough.

It is in your courage that the Christian Church must hope. Remember the heroes who amid danger and glory delivered your land from these heathen peoples. But for the exploits of Charlemagne and his peers France would be in like state with Palestine.

"Christian warriors, arise. Too long you have sold your swords to him who would offer you a chance to fight, and cared not for what cause you battled. Too long you have been a terror to your fellow-citizens because you forgot the purpose of your knighthood and sought only for strife that ye might display your prowess. To-day the knights of Christendom have found a true cause to defend. Go and fight against the barbarians for the deliverance of the holy places."

"God wills it! God wills it!" the assembly shouted in wild enthusiasm.

"Yes, God wills it!" said Urban. "Let those words be your war cry, and the cross your symbol. Wear it upon your shoulders and your breasts; let it shine upon your arms and your standards. It will be to you the

surety of victory or the palm of martyrdom."

Once more the people responded, "The cross! the cross! Give us the cross!"

And the multitude pressed forward and received from pope or bishop or priest a red

cross of silk or cloth. Knights and nobles, priests and monks, fastened it upon shoulder or breastplate, and he who wore it was henceforth known to all the world as one who would bear the cross to Palestine to defend the faith, and was therefore called a crusader.

II

Of Godfrey and his army

Of all the knights who pressed forward to receive the red cross on that November day at Clermont, none was destined to win such fame and honor as Godfrey of Bouillon, the hero of our tale. When he knelt to receive the emblem, Urban welcomed him joyfully.

"Now God be praised!" he cried. "Godfrey of Bouillon joins this cause. The renown which his valor has brought him already shall be increased a thousandfold by the victories he shall win for the faith."

When the pope had fastened the cross upon the young man's shoulder, Godfrey would have risen, but Urban bade him kneel yet a moment more, and put into his hands a sword, saying: "Son Godfrey, I give you a new sword, consecrated to this service. Draw it only in this cause to which you have to-day pledged yourself, and you shall win with it great victories and render untold service to the glory of God."

So Godfrey returned to his home with a new light in his eye and a new purpose in his heart; and as he journeyed through the provinces over which he was ruler, he found that the news of the Crusade had spread before him, and that men and women of all ranks were carried away with enthusiasm for this new cause. Knights, esquires, and pages met him as he rode through his duchy and begged him to let them enroll under his banner and journey with him to the Holy Land. Noble ladies stripped off their jewels, and wealthy merchants brought forth their hidden stores of gold and poured them at his feet, entreating him to use them to defend the faith.

Pope Urban had done well to rejoice when Godfrey joined the cause. He was a young man famous even in those days of chivalry and honor for the nobility of his character and the purity of his life. His prowess in battle and his skill in every exercise of arms had carried him into the highest ranks of knighthood, and it was said that no youthful knight in Christendom wore his honors more

modestly or ordered his life with more wisdom and grace. As soon as it was known that Duke Godfrey would lead an army to the Holy Land, the flower of chivalry flocked to his standard. When he was ready to set forth, there rode behind him ten thousand knights who were the best in all Europe.

They were a fair sight, those knights, as they set forth from France on that long journey. At the head of the army rode Godfrey, a tall and knightly figure in coat of mail, with silver helmet. He had laid aside the insignia of his rank and his richly emblazoned shield, and carried only a round buckler bearing the red cross of the crusader. With him rode his brothers, Baldwin and Eustace, and his esquire, Sigier. Ten thousand knights on horseback followed, clad in coat of mail, and wearing helmets of silver or steel, according to their rank. Every shield was ornamented with the device of the knight, — a lion, a leopard, a star, a tower, a bird, or some like symbol, — and from every lance floated a pennon of red, blue, green, or white.

Godfrey rode at the army's head,
Upon his shield the cross shone red.

Behind the knights marched an army of eighty thousand foot soldiers, and on the breast of every one of that marching throng shone the red cross, and from every lip rang the battle cry of the crusader, "God wills it!"

The story of the long march to Palestine may be read in the chronicles of the Crusades. The soldiers went through many lands and endured great hardships and perils. As they crossed from Europe and came into the lands of the East, the Turks and Arabs met them and opposed them in fierce and bloody battles. It was three years from the time when they started, when they came into the land of Palestine, and in those years many gallant knights had laid down their lives. Pestilence and fever had attacked the army and wrought even more havoc than the savage enemy, so that the number of men who came to the Holy Land was less than forty thousand of those who had set out so bravely from France.

Duke Godfrey had suffered many perils, but had come safe through them all. At one time he had been grievously wounded in an

attempt to save a soldier who was being killed by a bear, and had lain ill for many weeks in his tent. Then the men of the army despaired for the first time, and said, "Who will lead us and how can we go farther if our beloved leader be taken from us?" But the fever turned and Godfrey recovered, though it was many weeks before he could leave the litter in which he was borne over the weary stretches of desert and mountain, and ride his horse again.

But at last the day came when the standard bearers of the army, coming to the top of a hill, raised the cry, "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" and the crusading host rushed forward to gaze upon the city of their dreams. As they looked across the valley at the Holy City, the warriors forgot the perils and sorrows of the way and raised a mighty shout, "Jerusalem! God wills it!" And every prince and knight, and every page and esquire and priest, fell upon his knees and gave thanks to God. When they arose the horsemen did not mount again, but walked beside their steeds, and many of the

soldiers stripped the gay pennons from their lances and removed their shoes, walking barefoot as they neared the Holy City. As they marched they sang the words of the prophet of old, "Jerusalem, lift up thine eyes and behold the liberator who comes to break thy chains!"

III

Of the taking of Jerusalem

A few days after their arrival the crusaders made a fierce attack upon Jerusalem, but the walls were high and the fortifications strong, and the army was beaten back. Then Godfrey saw that the city could never be taken without engines of war, and he set his soldiers to find building materials of wood and iron and stone with which they could construct machines for attack. With the greatest difficulty they built three huge wooden towers, each higher than the city walls, which could be rolled on wheels. One of these was to be commanded by Duke Raymond, another by Tancred, and the third by Godfrey. But as

they built, the Saracens strengthened their defenses so that it seemed as if the city were well-nigh impregnable.

At daybreak on the morning when the attack was to be made, Raymond came to Godfrey's tent and, seeing him, exclaimed in astonishment: "What is this, my lord? Where is your breastplate and your coat of mail? And where your helmet? What meaneth this?"

And Godfrey replied: "When Pope Urban gave me this sword at Clermont, making me a knight of the Crusade, I vowed that on the day when I attacked Jerusalem I would not fight as a prince and commander, but as a common soldier of God. To-day I am fulfilling my vow."

When Raymond heard this, he told the other princes of Godfrey's decision, and they all followed his example of humility.

From their towers the Christians made their attack, and from the walls of the city the Turks fought, casting huge stones and boiling pitch and heavy arrows upon the soldiers as they tried to scale the ramparts. Raymond's

tower was broken down and burned, and Godfrey and Tancred could scarce hold their own. Hour after hour the conflict waged, and the hearts of the crusaders grew fearful as they saw their men falling on every side, but on the top of the highest tower they could see Godfrey leading them, and their hearts were strong again. The Turks threw sacks of blazing straw upon the wall where Godfrey was attacking, making a barricade of flame which choked and stifled the crusaders as they pushed forward. For a moment they fell back, and the Turks shouted with joy, thinking the victory won. But at that moment a knight was seen on the Mount of Olives, radiant in glittering white armor, and waving toward the Holy City a white shield marked with the red cross. Godfrey, the first to see this strange warrior, shouted: "St. George to our aid! The saints fight for us!"

At that moment the wind changed and drove the flames towards the Saracens, so that they fell back. That was Godfrey's chance. He dropped the drawbridge from his tower,

and sprang across it to the wall of the city. Brave knights followed him, driving back the Turks, and Godfrey stood victorious on the walls of Jerusalem.

A frightful slaughter followed, as the Christians dashed into the city. Godfrey fought as long as there was need, but when

he could not restrain his men from massacring their hated foe even after all resistance had ceased, he threw away his bloody weapons and went with three companions to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Barefoot and, without arms he entered the church, and kneeling there, gave thanks that Jerusalem had been rescued from the infidels.

When the other crusaders heard of this pious act, they ceased their bloody work and came and offered up their prayers with him. And the priests chanted a new anthem to the kneeling multitude, repeating over and over the words of the prophet, "You who love Jerusalem, rejoice with her, rejoice with her."

When the barons and lords came together after the conquest of Jerusalem, they decided to elect a king who should remain in the Holy Land and guard the Holy City. Godfrey was chosen to this office because of his great wisdom and valor and piety, and he fulfilled his duties faithfully and gained many victories. But it was only for one year. A fever came upon him, and he died just twelve months after the capture of the city. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and his sword was hung upon the walls of the church. Over his grave was laid a stone with the words, "Here lieth the victorious Duke Godfrey of Bouillon, who won all this land to the Christian faith."

THE TROUBADOUR

Gayly the Troubadour touched his guitar,
As he was hastening home from the war,
Singing, "From Palestine hither I come,—
Lady-love, lady-love, welcome me home!"

She for her Troubadour hopelessly wept,
Sadly she thought on him while others slept,
Sighing, "In search of thee, would I might roam,
Troubadour, Troubadour, come to thy home!"

Hark! 'twas the Troubadour breathing her name,
As under the battlement softly he came,
Singing, "From Palestine hither I come,
Lady-love, lady-love, welcome me home!"

THE ORDER OF ST. GEORGE

I

How the order came to be

For two hundred years the knights of Christendom made the conquest of the Holy Land their goal. Ever and anon as the years went by and one Crusade after another failed in its purpose of driving the heathen forever out of Palestine, a new king or priest or warrior would come forward and summon the knights to join once more in this sacred enterprise. But the time came when the crusading spirit passed, and there was no great mission to unite all men of chivalry and honor. King Edward the Third of England pondered long over this matter, as the chronicler tells us, and then resolved to rebuild the great castle of Windsor, formerly founded by King Arthur, and there in that place, where the Round Table was first established, to

create an order of knights, the bravest in the land. They were to be forty in number, and the day when they should be called together should be the feast day of St. George; and because you do not know the story of St. George as it was told to every page in England before ever he became an esquire, I am going to tell it to you now, as it is written in the ancient books of England and in the hearts of all true knights the world over.

Then you will know how it came about that St. George was honored as the first great English knight of chivalry, and as one of the seven famous champions of Christendom, and you will see why it was a fair promise of bravery and service and honor for this new order of knights, which was to renew the glory of chivalry, to meet on St. George's day and be called by his name, and why the rallying cry of every English army was

"St. George of merry England,
The sign of victory."

II

How St. George fought the dragon

"And by my pen I will recite
St. George's deeds, an English knight."

Away back in the second century after Christ, many hundred years before the coming of King Arthur, the ancient city of Coventry gave birth to St. George, the first Christian hero of England, who was also the first knight-errant that ever sought adventure in foreign lands. He deemed it dishonorable, when he grew to be a man, to spend his time at home in idleness, and not achieve somewhat by valor and prowess, so he set out from England in search of worthy adventure.

After many months of travel by sea and land George came in his journeyings to Egypt, which country was then greatly annoyed by a dangerous dragon. It is a fearsome description of him that the minstrel of that day gives.

"Within that country there did rest
A dreadful dragon, fierce and fell,
Whereby they were full sore oppressed.
Who by his poisonous breath each day
Did many of the city slay.
His skin more hard than brass was found,
That sword nor lance could pierce nor wound."

This terrible dragon had ranged up and down the country for twenty-four years, killing many and leaving devastation in his path.

George, seeking for shelter one night, was told this tale by an old hermit at whose door he knocked. Only on days when an innocent maiden was offered up to be swallowed alive, the old man told him, did the dragon cease to give forth this poisonous breath, against which no man living could stand. But now, alas! all the maidens had been offered up. In all Egypt there was none left but the king's daughter, and on the morrow she must give herself to the dragon unless some brave knight could be found who should have courage to encounter him and kill him. To such a knight the king had promised to

give his daughter in marriage and the crown of Egypt after his death.

The tale of this terrible monster and the news of the royal reward so fired the English knight that he vowed that he would either save the king's daughter or lose his own life in so glorious an enterprise. He took his repose with the old hermit that night, and at sunrise buckled on his armor and journeyed to the valley where the king's daughter was to be offered up. The bold knight had scarce entered the valley where the dragon had his abode, when the fiery monster caught sight of him and sent forth from his leathern throat a sound more terrible than thunder. George turned and beheld the dreadful sight. The size of this fell dragon was fearful to behold, for his length from his shoulder to his tail was more than fifty feet, and the scales on his body shone like glittering brass. The knight rode against him with all his speed, thrusting his spear straight at the fiery dragon's jaws, but it broke to splinters against those brass-like scales.

"The dragon then 'gan him assail,
And smote our hero with his tail;
Then down before him went horse and man,
Two ribs of George were bruised then.
Up started George with right good will,
And after ran the dragon still.
The dragon was aggrieved sore,
And smote at George more and more.
Long and hard was the fight
Between the dragon and the knight."

At last George hit him under the right wing, which was the only place where there were no scales. He smote so hard with his sword that it went in up to the hilt, and the dragon fell lifeless on the ground.

Thus within the view of the maiden who was waiting to be offered up he slew the dragon.

"When as that valiant champion there
Had slain the dragon in the field,
To court he brought the lady fair,
Which to all hearts much joy did yield."

When the people of the city saw him coming with the dragon's head upon his spear, they began to ring the bells, and brought

him into town with great procession. Not only in Egypt but in all the world he was held in great honor, and was made welcome in every place wherever he journeyed for that brave deed. In those days he was reckoned one of the seven great champions of the world, and so dearly did all knights hold him in remembrance in later days that they called upon him for aid in battle, thinking of him as a saint in heaven; and the story goes, as you have read, that when the knights were in great danger at Jerusalem, he did appear to Godfrey and the army and signed them on to enter and conquer the Holy City. Many times the soldiers returned from battle with the tale of how, when the day was going against them and they had prayed for aid, they had seen St. George appear in white armor, with the blood-red cross on his shoulder and the dragon on his shield, and always thereafter the soldiers pushed forward with fresh enthusiasm and won the day, shouting,

"St. George of merry England,
The sign of victory."

St. George of merry England,
The sign of victory.

III

How the order of St. George was founded

Therefore it was that King Edward called his knights together on the day of St. George, when he would found a new order of knighthood, whose members should perform in their day deeds as brave and as needful as those of St. George and of the knights of the Round Table.

First he summoned all the earls and barons and knights of the whole realm, and signified his purpose and great desire to form such an order. They all concurred joyfully in this, for it appeared to them an honorable undertaking. Forty knights were elected, who were known and celebrated as the greatest, and they bound themselves by oath and fealty to obey the ordinances agreed upon. For their name they took "The Order of St. George," and for the distinctive garment of the order a blue woolen mantle lined with scarlet (save the king's, which was lined with ermine), and upon every mantle were wrought the

arms of St. George. There is a pretty story of the way their motto came to them, and it shows well the knightly courtesy of those days.

A few days before the feast of St. George, while the king was still planning the brotherhood, the garter of the queen or one of the noble ladies of the court fell off as she danced. King Edward bent to take it from the ground and, observing the smiles of the courtiers, exclaimed, "Evil be to him who evil thinks," adding that the garter would soon be held in such high estimation that they would count themselves happy if they were permitted to wear it. When the order of St. George was founded, every knight wore upon his shoulder a garter of blue cloth or silk embroidered with gold, and upon it was inscribed the motto of the order, "Evil be to him who evil thinks"; by which the knights meant that only to him who carried evil in his heart would the world be evil.

When the forty knights were elected, they sent heralds to proclaim in France and Scotland, Burgundy and Flanders, Brabant and

the German Empire, that the order of St. George would hold at Windsor Castle a feast and tourney to which all knights and esquires were invited. To all who should be willing to come a safe-conduct would be granted until fifteen days after the feast, no matter what wars should be going on at the time. There was to be held at this feast a jousting by the forty knights of the order of St. George against all comers, and also by forty esquires. So should they prove their knightly skill to all the world. Moreover, the queen of England, accompanied by three hundred ladies and damsels, was to be present.

The king made great preparations for the feast, and for fifteen days the tourney was held at Windsor Castle. Many knights crossed the sea to be present, and there was great feasting and much skillful tourneying.

Thus King Edward renewed in those later days the order of the Round Table, making St. George the patron thereof. In every land like orders of knighthood were founded, and the glory of chivalry was renewed.

CHEVALIER BAYARD

I

Telling how Bayard chose to be a knight

In the Province of Dauphiny in France there were in the fifteenth century great and noble families from which had sprung many virtuous and noble knights, and of these families none was more noble than the family of Bayard.

When Lord Bayard, the head of the family, was an old man and knew that he must soon go the way of his fathers, he called to him his four sons and asked each to tell him what he desired to be. The eldest chose to dwell at home on the estates which would come to him by inheritance, and the two youngest were to go into the service of the church; but when it came to the turn of the second son to speak, he told his father that he wanted to be a knight and follow the pursuit of arms. That was Pierre, who was then

thirteen years old, and his eyes sparkled and his face glowed with eagerness as he spoke. His father was well pleased that he should choose this noble calling, and thus follow in the line of his brave forefathers, and promised that he would let him carry out his wish.

The father sent one of his serving men the very next day to the Bishop of Grenoble, his brother-in-law, praying him to come at his good pleasure to his castle. The good bishop came immediately, and sat down the next night at a banquet which had been prepared to welcome him. As was the custom of those days, the sons of the house waited upon their elders at table, and so well and gracefully did Pierre serve that he drew praise from all who were present.

When the meal was concluded, Lord Bayard told the company that his second son desired to become a knight.

"I must therefore," he said, "as the first step place him in the household of some prince or lord, that he may learn to behave himself with courtesy, and that when he is

older he may be trained in the use of arms. I pray you to advise me where I may best place him."

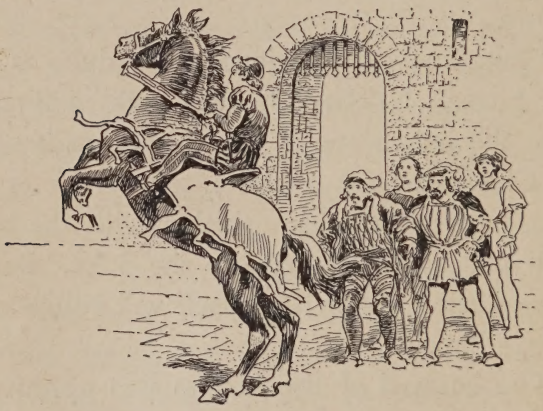
One guest recommended this house and another that one for the lad, but the bishop counseled that he be sent to the Duke of Savoy.

"You know how friendly the duke is to our house. I believe he will right willingly take the lad as one of his pages. He is now at Chambéry for a visit; to-morrow, if it please thee, I will ride thither with the boy and present him as page to the duke. Be at no expense for him; I myself will equip and mount him."

The counsel of the bishop was approved by all the company, and the aged father led the boy to the bishop and delivered him over to him with tears in his eyes, saying, "Take him, my lord, and I pray God that wherever you may place the boy he may do you honor."

The bishop, true to his promise, sent for his costumer, who worked all night getting an outfit ready for the lad, and on the morrow

all was prepared. After breakfast Pierre was shown his new charger, which had been led into the courtyard. All the men of the castle had gathered to bid the boy farewell, and they watched to see him mount. The



horse, accustomed to a man's weight, plunged and reared when Pierre leaped into the saddle, and all the company thought he would throw the boy. But Pierre gave him a touch with the spurs, and brought him with a gallop round the courtyard as if he were a man of thirty.

With tears of pride in his eyes the father took an affectionate leave of him and gave him his blessing, and his mother came from the tower window where she had been watching him and gave him wise counsel, saying:

"My child, you are going into the service of a noble prince. I charge you to observe three things, which if you do, be assured you shall prosper. First, before all things, love, fear, and serve God. Again, be gentle and courteous to all men, keeping thyself from pride and being ever loyal in word and deed. And third, be charitable to the poor and needy. And may we always have good report of you, my son."

The good lady drew out of her sleeve a little purse in which there were six crowns of gold and one of silver, and presented it to her son. He took leave of her tenderly and gratefully, and rode away, but for all the sorrow of parting, as he felt the charger under him and rode along the road to Chambery with his uncle, Pierre Bayard thought himself in Paradise.

II

Telling how Bayard received his knightly training

When they came to Chambéry, the bishop and his nephew were graciously received by the duke, who pressed them to dine with him. The boy Bayard waited upon his uncle so gracefully at the table that the duke observed it and asked who the lad was.

"He is my nephew, sir, whom I have brought to present to you, if his services would be of use to you," replied the bishop.

"Truly I should be a strange man and hard to please, if I refused such a gift; and if he walks in the steps of his fathers, he will be a brave man," said the duke, looking at the handsome, yellow-haired child.

So Bayard became a page in the duke's household, and there he remained for the space of half a year. He served the lords and ladies well and with spirit; he jumped and wrestled and exercised with the other lads; and above all he excelled in horsemanship, which is most needful in a knight.

Then the duke determined to go and visit the king of France at Lyons, where he was visiting with his princes and nobles and leading a merry life with jousts and tournaments daily, and he took Bayard with him as one of his attendants. The king, hearing that the Duke of Savoy was coming to Lyons, sent a count of his household to meet him on the road and welcome him. The count and his attendants met the party when they were some two leagues away from Lyons, and as they rode the count spoke of the yellow-haired page who rode before him.

"My friend," he said, "you have there a page who rides a goodly steed, and what is more, he rides it prettily."

"On my faith," said the duke, "it is scarcely six months since the Bishop of Grenoble made me a present of him, and yet I have never seen a youth of his age disport himself more bravely or with better grace, both on horseback and on foot. He comes from a race of brave and bold gentlemen, whom I believe he will resemble."

Then he said to the boy: "Spur, Bayard, spur! Give your horse a gallop!"

The boy, liking nothing better, galloped off instantly, and came back a moment later panting from his swift run.

"Upon my word, my lord," said the count admiringly, "that is indeed a youth who, to my thinking, will make a noble knight if he lives. I advise you to give both horse and page as present to the king, for he will be much pleased thereat, the horse being strong and handsome, and the page, in my eyes, still better."

So it came about that Bayard was transferred to the service of the king, where he remained three years as page, until he was seventeen. Then he exchanged the page's dagger for the sword of the esquire, and was sent into Italy to a garrison of men at arms to gain practice in arms.

III

Telling how Bayard gave a tournament

The king's last word to Chevalier Bayard (for so he was called from the day when he became an esquire) was this: "You go into a province where there are many fair ladies. Endeavor to find favor in their sight."

When Bayard came to the Italian town he was cordially welcomed, and was given a gay supper by the young esquires of the garrison. As they sat at table one of the company, a merry fellow, said: "Friend, I think it right to tell you that in all Italy there are no more beautiful ladies than those in this town. It is impossible you should have come hither from the court of France without gold. You must on your arrival do something in order to obtain the favor of these ladies. It is long since a prize has been given here, and I pray you therefore to give one before eight days are over. Grant this, I do entreat you," he concluded laughingly, "being my first request to you."

"By my faith," replied the chevalier, "hadst thou asked a far greater thing, I should willingly have granted it. As for this, it is a question whether it will give me or you the greatest pleasure. If to-morrow you will send around the trumpeter, we shall make every preparation."

The next morning the young lord was at Bayard's door with the trumpeter, and the chevalier gave him this proclamation to read.

"Pierre of Bayard, young gentleman and beginner in the use of arms, native of Dauphiny, one of the household of the king of France, hereby proclaims a tournament to be held on the outskirts of the town of Ayre, open to all comers, on the twentieth of July, in the year of our Lord fourteen hundred and ninety-five; this tournament to be of three tilts with unsheathed and blunted lances, in open lists and full armor; and of twelve sword thrusts; the whole on horseback. The victor to receive as prize a golden bracelet enameled with his arms, of the weight of thirty crowns. The next day will be for

encounters on foot; a combat of lances, and, after lances are broken, the combat continued with wooden maces at the discretion of the judges. The prize to be a diamond of the value of forty crowns."

"Of a surety," said the young lord, "not Lancelot, nor Tristram, nor Gawain ever did better. Trumpeter, herald this throughout the town; then go to all the garrisons within three days to proclaim it to all our friends."

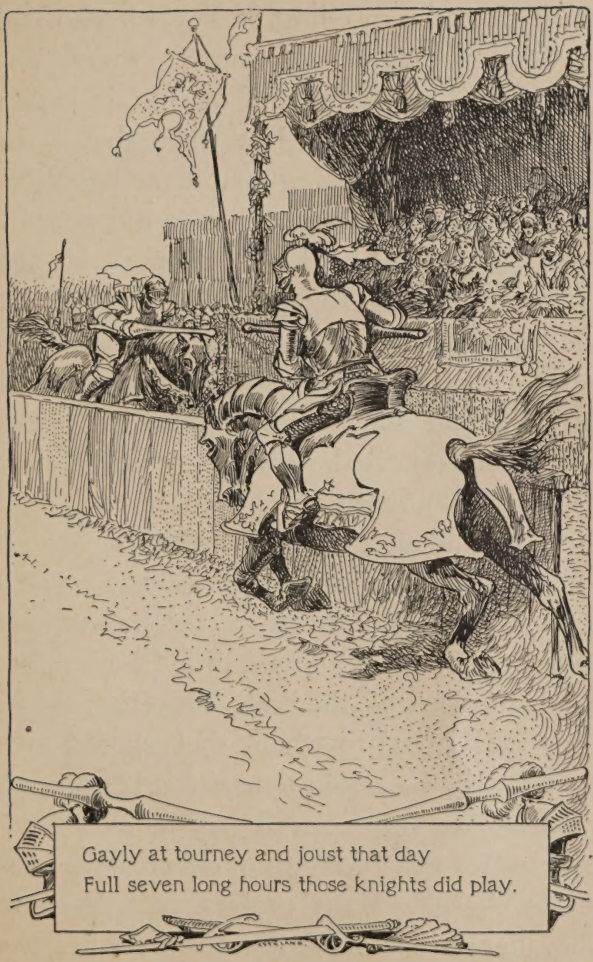
There were many gentlemen of arms in Picardy in those days, and they got themselves ready without delay. Every day they amused themselves with practice and banquet. Troubadours improvised new songs in honor of the ladies, and of the chevalier Bayard.

At length the longed-for day came, and all those who would take part in the tournament entered the lists. Forty-six gentlemen appeared and were divided into two parties by the judges. This done, the herald published the order of combat and the rules of battle. The galleries about the field were filled with fair ladies, and every knight bore on his shield a

sleeve, bow, glove, or scarf given him by the lady whom he would serve by his deeds of arms. By their shields and these tokens only could they be known, for every knight was covered from top to toe with shining armor.

Bayard was the first to present himself on the course, and Aymond of Dauphiny, his cousin, was the first to meet him. This was the combat with blunted lances, and they rode against each other so furiously and aimed so accurately that Aymond snapped his lance in two and Bayard, striking above the elbow, broke his into a dozen pieces. Yet with all the force of the blow neither was unhorsed. The trumpet sounded and all applauded, for that had been a beautiful joust.

The second and third combats went as well. Then they drew out their swords, the points of which were covered so that no injury should be done, and contested with them, fighting as before in pairs. It was agreed by the judges, as well as by all who watched, that better tilting with the lance or clashing with the sword had never been seen. In the evening they all



Gayly at tourney and joust that day
Full seven long hours those knights did play.

repaired to the dwelling of Bayard, who had provided a magnificent supper, which was graced by the presence of many fair ladies. Although it was very late when they separated after the feasting and dancing, there was not a single gentleman who did not pay his respects to Bayard at his home early the next morning, and thank him courteously for his gracious hospitality.

The next day the program was carried through, and for seven hours the valiant gentlemen contested. When all was over they went once more to the house of the good chevalier, and after the supper the judges with one voice pronounced that, while it was no detriment to the others to so report, yet Bayard had shown himself, of all the knights that had contested, the best. Then they asked the good Bayard to whom they should give the prize, for he would not take it because he was host; and he declared they should give it to those who each day were deemed the best beside himself. Many praises were given to Chevalier Bayard for this tourney which he gave.

IV

Telling of an adventure that he had

Bayard's life in Italy was not made up entirely of playing the game of war on the field of tourney. Before he had been many months in the garrison, certain towns near by rose in revolt against the king of France. This was but one part of a widespread warfare in which Germany was trying to send an army into Italy and win that country away from France. The king sent an army to hold his unruly subjects in submission, and while they were yet on the way Chevalier Bayard heard that there were within a neighboring garrison three hundred horsemen of the enemy. He begged his companions to go with him to surprise them, which they did most gladly.

When the captain of those Italian horsemen heard through his spies that the French had ridden forth to meet him, he would not tarry inside the walls of the fort to be taken as a bird in the nest, but rode without the wall and there awaited his assailants.

The French advanced with a mighty charge, crying, "For France! For France!" and many on both sides were brought to the ground. The combat lasted a full hour, during which none knew which side would be successful. This made the chevalier angry, so that he called out to his companions, saying: "Ho, my lords! shall we be held here all the livelong day by these few men? To hand! Be of good courage! Throw them to earth!"

At his words his companions, exerting themselves afresh, rushed with new force upon the Italians, who, beginning to lose ground, retreated a little, still defending themselves manfully. The French drove the little band back four or five miles along the road to Milan, although they could not overcome them. When, however, the Italians found themselves nearing Milan, they turned and fled at a rapid pace towards the town. The French pursued until quite close to the gates; then some of the older men called aloud, "Turn, turn, men of arms!" All heard save Bayard, who was so absorbed in the combat

that he paid no heed to where he was, but dashed on after his antagonist, with whom he was then exchanging blows. He did not notice the city gates or the houses, so eager was he, but galloped pell-mell after the enemy, until of a sudden he found himself in the square in front of the palace, surrounded on all sides by shouting Italians. The captain of the band which he had followed took him prisoner and led him within the palace, where presently the lord of the castle, hearing that he was a wondrous valiant and bold gentleman, desired to see him.

Bayard was presented to Lord Ludovic, who was the head of all the German army, and the lord marveled that this Bayard of whom he had heard so much was so young.

"Come hither, good sir!" he said to him; "what brought you to this town?"

"By my good faith, my lord," replied the good chevalier, in no wise abashed, "I did not intend to come thus alone, but thought that I was accompanied by my companions, who are better acquainted with the usages of

warfare than I; for had they done as I, they would now be your prisoners. Nevertheless, in spite of my adventure, I am thankful for my good fortune in having fallen into the hands of so good a master as the captain who took me prisoner, for he is a gallant knight."

Lord Ludovic asked him to tell on his knightly honor how many men the king of France had in his army.

Bayard told him frankly that there were but fourteen or fifteen hundred knights and esquires, and eighteen thousand men on foot. "But they are all picked men," he added, "who are resolved to conquer Milan. It seems to me, my lord, that you would be safer in Germany than here, for I assure you that your men are not able to contend with us."

Lord Ludovic was pleased with the young man's boldness, and answered him, saying: "Upon my faith, young sir, I would that the king's army and mine might meet in battle to determine who is best. I see no other way."

"Provided I were out of prison," replied Bayard, "I would it were to-morrow."

"That shall not stand in the way," said Ludovic, "for I set you free from this moment; but first ask what you wish, and I will grant it."

Bayard thanked him and said, "My lord, I ask for naught save of thy courtesy to return my horse and arms and to allow me to depart."

"Of a truth that shall be granted thee," said the German, "and at once."

When the serving men had finished arming the chevalier, he leaped to his saddle without putting foot in the stirrup, and rode away after thanking them all for their courtesy. As he rode forth, Lord Ludovic exclaimed aloud, "If all the men of France are such as he, it will fare ill with me and my men."

When Bayard reached camp his companions flocked about him, congratulating him on his escape. The head of the garrison, seeing him, said: "Hallo, Bayard! what brought you out of prison? I was about to send one of my trumpeters to pay your ransom."

"My lord, I thank you," replied Bayard, "but Lord Ludovic has liberated me out of his great courtesy and generosity."

V

Telling how Bayard won for himself great honor

When Bayard was twenty-one years old, he received the degree of knight, and he rendered service during his life to three kings of France, and won for each of them great victories on the field of battle. And in all the realms where he fought there was no knight who kept his life more pure or his knightly honor more unstained than he. So great was his fame that he was known in all the nations as the good Chevalier Bayard, the knight "without fear and without reproach."

Well might they say that he was without fear, for he carried the banner of France in more battles and sieges and assaults than could possibly be written down, and never shrank from any danger. It was said that the Spaniards and Germans and Italians feared him more than any man in the French army, and that the news that he was in a battle made the stoutest hearts to quail.

Yet it was not for his skill in war that Bayard was most famous, but for the blameless and gentle life that he lived. Those were times when knighthood was not so high a calling as in the days of Arthur and Charlemagne and Godfrey. Already there were men who sold their swords to the highest bidder, and spent their lives in useless strife, that brought no honor nor good to any one; and already there were wise men who said that in those civilized times, when there was no need to fight against the Moors and Saracens or to protect the land against the northern barbarians, knightly men could lead better and braver lives at home than abroad. Those were days when many knights became less noble, but Bayard was ever true to his vows. He would never fight in any service save that of his king and country, although other rulers offered him rich rewards. He treated his prisoners with wonderful humanity and gentleness. He never boasted of his victories, although pride was the besetting sin of his comrades. In every way he so carried himself

as to win the title by which he has been known ever since, "the good knight, without fear and without reproach."

It was Bayard's fame and loyalty to his king that brought him the greatest honor that could come to any knight. Soon after his coronation, Francis I, who was the third king under whom Bayard had served, was summoned from his court by the news of a great revolt in the south. He sent Bayard in all haste with the vanguard of the army, and himself followed quickly. A mighty battle was fought, which lasted two days, and in which many hundreds of men were killed.

In those two days the chevalier won new laurels by his bravery, and King Francis was pleased to greatly honor him. The young king wished to bestow on those who had served him well the honor of knighthood. But he was not himself a knight, and could not therefore give others that degree. He sent for Bayard and told him that he desired to be knighted by him, as the knight of greatest renown there.

"Sire," said Bayard, "he who is crowned and consecrated and anointed king of so noble a realm is already a knight above all other knights."

"Come, Bayard," replied the king. "Hasten! Tell me not laws and rules, but obey my will and command, else are you not so faithful as my poorest subject."

"Surely, sire, I will do it not once, but one hundred times at your command," replied Bayard, and he took sword and laying it upon the king's shoulder as he knelt before him, said, "Sire, may you be as renowned as Roland or Oliver or Godfrey; and God grant that you may never turn your back in war!"

Then in a merry manner he held up his sword and spoke to it, saying: "Most fortunate art thou to have this day conferred knighthood on so distinguished and powerful a king. Truly, my good sword, I shall keep thee as a sacred relic honored above all others, and will never use thee save against the Moors or Saracens or other heathen peoples."

So saying, he returned it to its scabbard.

The day came when Bayard was mortally wounded in battle, and died upon the field. Then there was deep mourning, not only in France but in all the countries of those against whom he had fought, for all deemed him a noble knight. And there are some who say that he was the last perfect knight that ever lived, but that can hardly be true.

Here endeth the very joyous and pleasant and refreshing history of the noble Lord Bayard (may his renown abide), and here endeth likewise this little book which treateth of the noble acts and deeds of chivalry, of prowess and hardiness, of love and friendship, and of gentleness and courtesy.

"The knight's bones are dust,
And his good sword rust:
His soul is with the saints, I trust."

NOTES

"Some doubted its historic truth,
But while they doubted, ne'ertheless
Saw in it gleams of truthfulness."
Longfellow

The chronicles, romances, and histories cited below are the sources from which the stories of individual heroes have been drawn, but these were written for contemporary readers who were familiar with the customs and standards of knighthood. In order to present clear and vivid pictures of the scenes and ceremonies of a knightly career, it has been necessary to consult many treatises on chivalric orders which cannot here be mentioned.

Page 5. The Drawing of the Sword. The story of the miraculous appearance of the sword and of the coming of the boy king is told from the version in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. The material from which Arthurian legends are drawn is so varied in character, and often so unsuitable for children, that the writer must do as did the story-tellers of old, — treat it as a storehouse out of which he may draw that which suits his individual need and purpose. In the present tales the symbolism of Malory and Tennyson has been kept in the background, and King Arthur has been presented in what is his rightful guise as regards the development of chivalry, as a strong and noble king, divinely appointed, and gladly received by the people, who proved himself more than worthy of the choice.

Page 15. The Founding of the Round Table. A combination of Malory and Tennyson which preserves the simplicity of the former and the idealism of the latter.

Page 21. Perceval. The stories of Malory and Tennyson, the usual source books for tales of King Arthur's knights, are so closely interwoven one with another, and all with the Grail legend, that it has seemed best to give the stories of two of the noblest knights of the Round Table, the tales of Perceval and of Gawain, as they are found in other and simpler Arthurian romance. The story of Perceval has won for itself a place among the world's great tales. It is the best of a cycle of romances in which a young hero is brought up in the forest in ignorance of the world and its ways. An English minstrel tells in quaint verse and simple, direct fashion the story of *Syr Percyvelle*, and his poem is the basis for our version. But much is introduced in the way of detail and setting from the more elaborate romances of Chrétien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach, as well as from Marie de France's *Lay of Tyolet*. The return of the hero to his mother is a pleasing feature found only in the original English Perceval legend.

Page 46. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. "Of all the heroes of British Romance," writes Dr. W. H. Schofield, "Gawain is the most admirable and most interesting. In the early poems of the cycle he is invariably represented as the mirror of courtesy, a truly noble knight, without fear or reproach." He is "gay, gracious, and good," the beloved of all. Of this cycle of which he is the hero, Dr. Schofield goes on to say that *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight*, the old English poem of 2500 lines on which our tale is based, "is incomparably the best of the English romances, and one of the finest in any language." We have followed as closely as possible the quaint and delightful style of the author, and have found the story especially valuable for use in this collection because it gives a perfect picture of King Arthur's hall in holiday time, of the way adventures came to his knights without the seeking, and of a typical quest of the best type. A more charming picture of knightly life it would be hard to find.

Page 75. The Passing of Arthur. The causes of the downfall of the Round Table are here lightly touched upon. Verse in this and the other tales of Arthur is adapted from Tennyson.

Page 79. Roland, a Knight of France. Roland is a hero of Italy as well as of France, and it is from Italian literature that we take the tale of his childhood. His first experience on the battle field comes from the old English romance of Ogier the Dane, and the incident of his combat with Oliver is found in the French account of the revolt of Guerin de Montglave against Charlemagne. Together the three chapters give an interesting account of the beginning of his famous knightly career, and present an opportunity to recount the ceremonies of dubbing a knight and to tell of the friendship between Roland and Oliver. The Charlemagne cycle is most confused and difficult of access to modern readers.

Page 101. A Steed! A Steed! From Motherwell's *Ancient Minstrelsy*.

Page 103. The Battle of Ronceval. This story is much abridged from the *Chanson de Roland;* the selections in verse are adapted from the beautiful translation of John O'Hagan. This is one of the classics of literature as well as of chivalry.

Page 125. Godfrey, a Knight of the Crusades. Michaud's *History of the Crusades* and Caxton's reprint of William of Tyre's history of Godfrey de Bouillon are the sources for the stories of the beginnings of the first Crusade and of its hero Godfrey. The chronicles of that period are vivid and picturesque.

Page 143. The Troubadour. An old song of crusading days.

Page 144. The Order of St. George. The story of St. George and the dragon is told in prose in the histories of the seven champions of Christendom, and in verse in a ballad in Percy's *Reliques*. The account of the founding of the Order of St. George is given in Froissart and other chroniclers. This is the period when chivalry as an institution attained its highest perfection.

Page 155. Chevalier Bayard. Bayard was fortunate in having a "loyal servitor," who set forth the history of his master's life in admiring and entertaining fashion. There are several modern French and English translations of this ancient book, which gives a good picture of mediæval life in the period when, as Ben Jonson puts it, "every house became an academy of honor,"

and when the training of page, esquire, and knight was the ideal method of education, for where could he better

> " learn to vault, to ride, to fence,
> To move his body gracefuller, to speak
> His language purer, or to tune his mind
> Or manners more to the harmony of nature,
> Than in these nurseries of nobility? "

Another picture of ideal chivalry is given in this ballad from the French of Eustache Deschamps, a poet of the fourteenth century. The English version is from Guizot's *History of France.*

> " Amend your lives, ye who would fain
> The order of the knights attain;
> Devoutly watch, devoutly pray;
> From pride and sin, oh, turn away!
> Shun all that 's base; the Church defend;
> Be the widow's and the orphan's friend;
> Be good and leal; take naught by might;
> Be bold and guard the people's right;—
> This is the rule for the gallant knight.
>
> Be meek of heart; work day by day;
> Tread, ever tread, the knightly way;
> Make lawful war; long travel dare;
> Tourney and joust for lady fair;
> To everlasting honor cling,
> That none the barbs of blame may fling;
> Be never slack in work or fight;
> Be ever least in self's own sight;—
> This is the rule for the gallant knight.
>
> Love the liege lord; with might and main
> His rights above all else maintain;
> Be open-handed, just and true;
> The paths of upright men pursue;
> No deaf ear to their precepts turn;
> The prowess of the valiant learn;
> That ye may do things great and bright,
> As did Great Alexander hight;—
> This is the rule for the gallant knight."

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